

Creature Comforts

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Creature Comforts

by [BunnyBopper](#)

Summary

Remus and Severus are paired to work together in Care of Magical Creatures in 6th year. Neither one is too happy with the arrangement at first.

Notes

WARNING: Minor drug reference

Chapter 1

Severus didn't like care of magical creatures. He'd only gone on to take it at NEWT level because Lily had. Well that and the only other subject that fitted with his timetable was Muggle Studies and he didn't want to take that for obvious reasons. Severus wasn't an 'animal person'. His dad wouldn't have let him have pets as a kid even if he'd wanted one. He couldn't tell what animals were thinking, which made them unpredictable, which made them a threat. Magical creatures were essentially just animals with powers that made them even more dangerous. Lily had just laughed when he'd told her about his nervousness at the start of third year.

But now that she wasn't speaking to him he was dreading today's class even more than usual. Severus thought Professor Kettleburn was a good teacher despite his occasional recklessness. He was even one of the few that Severus actually liked. The only downside to his methods was that he always made students split into pairs to work together at the start of the year. These pairs had to be inter-house because "if you can't get along with someone different to you how do you expect to get along with a blast-ended skrewt?". Yes, Professor Kettleburn didn't approve of the 'segregation' of students and thought it caused 'unnecessary friction'. So he did what he could to make them interact.

This hadn't been a problem up until now because Severus had always worked with Lily. It was the main reason he'd done so well in his O.W.L. He looked around at the other students milling about on the grass, still wet with morning dew, and felt nothing but resentment. Although there was a chill in the air, the September sunshine was beginning to edge through the clouds and sparkle off the black lake. Severus squinted against it. He didn't like being out on the grounds any more and had barely left the dungeons since returning to Hogwarts this year.

As he watched he noticed Lily tap the shoulder of a pretty, blonde Slytherin girl, named Emma Edgecombe, who smiled and nodded when she asked her to be her partner. Shit. Emma seemed gentle on the outside but she would tear Lily to pieces given half a chance. He tried to catch her eye to give her some kind of non-verbal warning but she was resolutely ignoring him.

Severus was in no hurry to find some unlucky Gryffindor to work with. Hopefully there would be nobody left and he could just work on his own. He occupied himself with kicking at a tuft of grass while the others paired off with grumbles and awkward smiles.

"Having trouble finding a partner, Mr Snape?" Kettleburn said as he limped over to him on his wooden leg.

"I was hoping I could work on my own this year Sir. I-"

"I'm afraid that won't be possible. You know half your grade is based on joint working."

Severus is about to launch into his already prepared argument but stops at the sound of someone approaching.

"Sorry I'm late Professor!"

Severus turned to see a breathless Remus Lupin panting behind them. His pale brown hair was uncombed and his robes were dishevelled suggesting he'd slept in. Severus wastes no time in

shooting the boy a glare who looks away from him guiltily. A lot had happened in 5th year. There was, of course, that humiliating day by this very lake. The day that still replayed in his head each night making sleep more and more difficult to come by. But last year was also the year that Severus had learned Lupin's secret. It had resulted in more degradation at having to be saved by Potter and he was still left with the shock and fear that Black would go so far as to actually try to kill him. Still, it was almost worth it to finally have answers. Not to mention the sense of power it gave him.

He had no intention of telling anyone and risking (completely unjust) expulsion by breaking his promise to Dumbledore, but Lupin couldn't be sure of that and he enjoyed how nervous it made him. Severus knew exactly why he'd slept in today. He would still be feeling the effects of his most recent transformation. Severus briefly wondered where he spent his time as a werewolf when he wasn't at Hogwarts.

"Lupin! Excellent timing! You can work with Severus this year." Kettleburn said cheerily as he placed a hand on Lupin's shoulder and guided him closer to where Severus stood. The two boys look at each other in horror.

"I don't think that'll be-" Lupin began but Severus cut him off.

"Absolutely not!"

"Nothing else for it I'm afraid!" Kettleburn responded, grinning behind his grey moustache.

"Everyone else is already paired off...and we must start the lesson! Right everyone, gather round! With your partners please." He shouted to the rest of the class.

Severus could see Black and Pettigrew sniggering and pointing at them. Potter was giving Lupin a look of deep sympathy at the apparent misfortune of having to work with him. Well he didn't have to worry because it wasn't going to be happening. Severus would refuse to work with any of the Marauders. Even the least threatening one.

He made his way over to the enclosure Kettleburn was guiding them to and stood as far away from Lupin as he could get away with. Slowly meandering around inside were about two dozen creatures that looked like giant snails which came up to around the height of Severus' knee. Each one had different coloured shells, slowly changing with hypnotic swirls, and they left behind a trail of glistening slime as they slithered.

"For our first lesson of the term we're starting with something easy. Streelers!" Kettleburn boomed excitedly, gesturing a wooden mechanical arm toward the pen.

Easy? Weren't streelers highly toxic? The grass where their slime trails had touched was already shrivelling and browning.

"Now, can anybody name the country the streeler is native to?" Kettleburn asked the crowd of students.

"Africa!" Pettigrew squeaked proudly.

Severus couldn't help himself.

"Africa isn't a country." He said quietly, rolling his eyes.

"Whatever Snively." Black whispered nastily, elbowing him forward towards the streeler enclosure when Kettleburn's gaze was elsewhere. Though the teacher abhorred bullying of any

kind, his eyepatch and failing hearing meant he wasn't always aware when it was occurring.

“Good Pettigrew! Specifically Kenya but I would also have accepted Tanzania as there are a small number there. As you can see they can thrive in Europe with the right breeding despite the difference in climate. Wizards have successfully...”

Severus was finding it hard to focus on the lecture with one marauder next to him and the other three close behind. Being in close proximity to them and substance that could kill him fairly quickly made him anxious. He kept his gaze set on one of the creatures whose shell was slowly turning from a shade of shocking pink to dark green as it munched slowly on a patch of undamaged grass.

“Well then, now it's your turn! Grab a streeler and get feeding them. There should be one for each pair. While they're eating you can sketch them out in your books. Oh, and don't forget to use the extra thick gloves when handling them if you want to avoid a visit to the hospital wing!” With that Kettleburn opened the enclosure and set them loose.

Severus made his way over to the bench where various pairs of gloves and a selection of vegetation was laid out. He didn't turn to see if Lupin was following him or not. As he selected his gloves he heard the voice of James Potter behind him.

“I don't think you really need those Snivellus...considering you produce the same slime that those things do.”

A few of the other students snickered. Severus just ignored him. It was getting harder and harder to fight back now he'd lost Lily's friendship. If he wasn't careful they might actually break him this year. He snatched up the gloves and strode back over to the streeler he'd been watching earlier. Donning the protective equipment, he picks up the animal roughly before he can hesitate.

“Hey watch out!”

The sound of Lupin's voice makes him turn, causing him to narrowly escape a long spike that emerged from the streeler's shell.

“You need to make sure you hold it at arms length! Weren't you listening?” Lupin was saying as he caught up to him, clutching a handful of greenery. Severus just scowls at him and then at the streeler which cocks an antennae at him curiously. He walks over to a section of grass far from the other students and sets the overgrown snail down carefully. To his displeasure, Lupin follows and sits down next to him. “I brought a selection of leaves,” the boy continued, “I couldn't remember which ones they were supposed to like.”

Severus watches as Lupin offers a purple leaf to the streeler from his gloved hand which causes it to shrivel in on itself. With a withering look, Severus snatches a handful of kale from Lupin that seems to please the creature greatly and it starts to nibble happily.

“Awesome! You did it!”

Severus doesn't respond or look at him as he takes out his book and drawing materials. Kettleburn always made them sketch out a creature and label it anatomically when they were first introduced to it. It was the most enjoyable part of the class in Severus' opinion, not least because he was rather good at drawing.

The same couldn't be said for Lupin apparently. His streeler illustration was looking more and more like a squat giraffe every time Severus sneaked a glance at it. Lucky for him they were

graded on accuracy rather than artistic talent. Lupin had his textbook open and was using it to label his drawing. He suddenly snorted at something he'd read.

“Sorry,” he said sheepishly when he caught Severus looking at him in exasperation. “I just read that these things are kept as pets by 'those who enjoy kaleidoscopic colour changes'. What kind of people would keep something so dangerous as a pet?”

“People who are on something,” Severus responded despite himself. Lupin laughed, some of the nervous tension on his face drained away.

“You can say that again!”

“No, I mean literally. People like to stare at them after they get high.”

Lupin was giving him his full attention now. He actually seemed pleased that Severus was talking to him.

“Really? Are you speaking from experience?” He asked with an amused smile.

“No Lupin,” Severus sighed. “I just made the effort to research before class.”

“Yeah right, now I know what you Slytherins get up to in your spare time!” Lupin was teasing him but it was playful rather than cruel.

“Less dangerous than what you get up to in your spare time.”

“Touché.” Lupin's smirking was really starting to annoy him. At least he knew where he stood with the other three. He couldn't stand this fake friendliness.

They didn't speak again for the rest of the lesson. When it was over Severus hung back to speak with Professor Kettleburn. Again he pleaded with him to let him work alone. Or at least let him switch partners.

“I'm afraid not Mr Snape” Kettleburn wasn't meeting his gaze as he wandered over the area the students had been working and sprinkled a dark purple powder over the damaged grass that caused it to regrow instantly.

“But sir, please, you don't understand!”

Finally his teacher turned to look at him. Severus could see a sympathy in his gaze that made him burn with shame. He places a mechanical hand on Severus' shoulder.

“Look Severus, I'm not blind to the way some of the other students treat you...and I've been rather concerned about you since you and Miss Evans seem to have run into some difficulty. But Remus is a kind boy. I think he'll-”

“You don't know him like I do. He-” Severus stops abruptly when he notices that Lupin has quietly approached them.

“Listen, sir, I don't have a problem being partners with Severus but if he's that uncomfortable maybe we should switch.”

“Tell you what boys, indulge me! Work together for the rest of the month and if you still can't stand each other I'll see about switching you. There's always some pair that end up falling out and beg to change by then anyway. Until then I shall remain optimistic! Now run along, I'm sure you

have other classes to get to.” With an air of finality he turns back to tending the grass, humming happily.

Severus summons up one final sneer for Lupin before he stalks off back to the castle. Turning back to look over his shoulder (a habit he's picked up over the years) he sees that the rest of the marauders are still there and have huddled around Lupin in a conspiratorial manner. He walks faster, intent on returning to the safety of the dungeons.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Spending time with Snape wouldn't be fun, but that didn't matter as long as it alleviated his conscience

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Remus liked Care of Magical Creatures. He was glad that he'd made it into the NEWT class this year, along with his three friends. The way Professor Kettleburn taught them how to treat potentially dangerous creatures with kindness and respect made him hopeful that attitudes to people with his own condition could one day change. (Although his professor's wood to flesh ratio didn't exactly make him a poster child for the subject.) Plus his naturally caring nature had always made him drawn to animals and magical creatures alike.

So he was angry with himself for sleeping in for his first lesson of the year. Still, he thought Kettleburn would give him a break what with it being such an early morning class so soon after the full moon. Therefore the punishment of having to work with Severus Snape felt...excessive to say the least. He wasn't sure if he could handle a whole year of dirty looks and passive aggressive remarks. Not that he hadn't earned them.

The incident last year at the black lake kept replaying over and over in Remus' mind. He felt so guilty about not stepping in to stop his friends that he thought about it even more often than the night he'd almost killed Snape. At least he had the excuse of not having control over his actions then. Of course Snape should never have called Lily what he called her...but Remus didn't think he'd really meant it. More like he'd just lashed out with the worst thing that came to his mind. Snape never wasted time with these things and always went straight for the most extreme insult, hex or curse in order to cause the most damage as quickly as possible. Remus supposed that was a result of years of being regularly attacked four against one (well three against one; he'd never directly participated, but still, he was sure Snape didn't see it that way).

While Professor Kettleburn began his lecture about streelers Remus took some time to study his new partner. His black eyes were fixed on one of the creatures in front of him as if he was determined to ignore everyone else around him. Snape seemed so lost and lonely now. Remus had barely seen him out of the dungeons since they returned and when he did he looked even more pale and withdrawn than usual. He hadn't even bothered to react when Sirius shot a successful trip jinx at him on the way to Defence Against the Dark Arts yesterday. Remus wished he could do something to help him...but his guilt didn't quite stretch far enough to risk losing his friends and becoming a fellow outcast.

But maybe this was his opportunity! This way he could interact with Snape without his friends judging him. Maybe he could get the others to lay off him this year – *C'mon guys I have to work with him! It'll make things really awkward if you cast a biting jinx on his textbook again...* - spending time with Snape wouldn't be fun, but that didn't matter as long as it alleviated his conscience.

So Remus made up his mind to try his best to make things work with the arrangement. By the end

of the lesson he'd actually got the other boy to talk to him without sneering and Remus considered that a win. It hadn't stopped Snape from begging Kettleburn to let them switch partners but their teacher wasn't having it. His reputation for trying to make everyone get along was legendary.

“Oh mate, I can't believe you have to work with that nasty little git,” James said sympathetically when he and his other two friends had lingered behind to speak with him. He watched Snape throw a paranoid look over his shoulder at them as he walked quickly back to the castle. “If he uses this as an opportunity to give you a hard time about...you-know-what... just let us know. We'll sort him out.”

“I think you and Sirius 'sorted him out' last year enough for a lifetime,” Remus responded just loud enough for James to hear. His friend bristled defensively causing Remus to start backtracking. He'd heard enough of James' justifications. “I actually think it'll be fine. We just talked about the lesson. He's a smart guy and he's amazing at drawing. His streeler looked like it was going to slither off the page!” Remus had started rambling under the scrutiny of his friends.

Sirius gave him a hard slap on the shoulder. “I'm so happy to hear about your engagement to dear old Snivelly, Moony! I do hope I'll get an invitation!”

“Piss off,” Remus snapped as he shrugged his friend off. Maybe this was going to be more difficult than he imagined.

Indeed, their next lesson together doesn't go as well as the first. He had opened by asking Snape if he'd smoked any alihosty leaves prior to their final lesson on streelers. The other boy didn't seem to find it funny and spent the rest of the time ignoring him completely. They worked in silence as they cleaned out the enclosure and collected the mucus, which apparently had useful properties, in glass vials. Kettleburn finished up by telling them they had an essay on the creatures due next week that was to be 'at least' four rolls of parchment.

“I know, I know, it's a big jump from OWL level,” he said to the collectively groaning class. “But if you work together on the research it should be much more manageable.”

The rest of his friends immediately started arguing with their own Slytherin partners about who would do most of the work. Remus tried to catch Snape's eye but he'd already taken off at top speed back to the castle.

“Severus? Hey wait! Severus!”

At the sound of Remus calling his name Snape whipped round angrily.

“Oh it's 'Severus' now is it? Not Snivellus or Snivelly or greasy-haired git or – what was my personal favourite again? Oh yes. Slimy dickweasel.”

“I've never called you any of those things,” said Remus, taken aback by the other boy's anger.

Snape moved in closer to him, a hard, nasty smile twisted his features. “No? Well you've certainly seemed content to sit back and watch your friends do it.” Remus opened his mouth to defend himself but quickly closed it when he realised he couldn't. “Well? What is it you want from me Lupin?” Snape demanded.

“I...we need to arrange a time to work on the essay.”

Snape's smile somehow became even nastier. “If you think I'm working on anything with you then

you're delusional.”

With that Snape turned and left him standing alone.

Several days later Remus was ready to try again. Although he'd been put off by their last less-than-pleasant encounter, once the Griffindor set his mind to something he could be rather determined. The problem was that Severus Snape was proving to be a difficult person to track down. He'd apparently become an expert at blending into the background. There was nothing else for it. Remus would have to break out the map.

“Ooh are you going to use it to spy on that cute Ravenclaw girl you were talking to in Charms?” James asked, looking up from his usual position in the most comfortable armchair of the Griffindor common room. He made as if to hand the marauder's map over to Remus but pulled it back just before the boy could grab it.

“I don't need to resort to the same tactics you and Sirius use,” he responded irritably after finally succeeding in taking it from him. “Plus she's not my type.”

“Who is these days? You haven't even snogged anyone since Mary MacDonald in fourth year!”

Remus was about to correct James by telling him he hadn't snogged anyone *that he knew about* since fourth year before he realised that this would invite too many questions. There were still parts of himself that even the werewolf was too afraid to share with his friends.

After successfully evading any more questions, Remus retreated to the dormitory and set himself up behind the closed curtains of his four-poster. He kept one eye on the map open beside him while skimming his textbook to begin research for the essay. Eventually he saw that the dot labelled 'Severus Snape' had moved from it's spot in a corner of the Slytherin common room and began to make it's way out of the dungeons. It didn't take long for Remus to deduce that he was headed for the library. Snape didn't pause to dawdle in the corridors like the other students. Remus imagined the boy walking in that twitchy way of his, head down, his own muffliato spell cast in his ears so he wouldn't be able to hear anyone shout something horrible at him as he passed.

Remus jumped up, stashed the map in his pocket and grabbed his books. As he exited the portrait hole he managed to get away with just a playful wink in response to James questioning him about where he was going. On his way to the library Remus considered his next move carefully. Coming on too strong was just going to make Snape think it was some setup for a prank...he would have to appeal to his practicality.

He soon found Snape huddled in the darkest corner of the library. By the look of it he must have had every textbook on magizoology open in front of him. Snape was so absorbed in one of them that he didn't notice Remus until he was standing right opposite him. His lip curled into a sneer but before he could open his mouth to tell him to 'fuck off' – or worse – Remus held one hand in front of him before saying his piece.

“I'm just here because it's the most logical thing for the both of us. It's a lot of research for just one person. Plus, if we're supposed to be working together it won't look very good if our essays are completely different. I'm not expecting us to be bosom friends but surely we can be civil enough to each other to get through the rest of the month?”

“No.”

"I'm sorry?" Remus was sure appealing to Snape's reasoning would work.

"I said – 'no' – I don't care how much work I have to do. I don't want anything to do with you." Snape says the last few words slowly as if making sure Remus can understand. "So kindly get out of my sight." He turned his gaze back down to his book.

"No."

"What part of what I just said didn't you understand, Lupin?"

"Oh I understood all of it. I also understand that you're hogging every textbook that mentions streelers in the library!" said Remus, sitting down in front of him. "If I'm going to do research for two I need to start now." With that he snatches up the nearest book from Snape's pile.

The other boy just stared at him for a few moments, apparently astounded by Remus' audacity. He expected him to say something more but Snape just tutted and went back to studying, allowing curtains of black hair to fall over his face and hide him from view.

They worked in angry, awkward silence for a long while. Suddenly Remus got an idea. He changed the angle of the book he was taking notes in, so that it was just in Snape's line of sight, and started writing. He looks as Remus knew he would. His eyes kept darting back and forth to the words Remus was steadily writing. Pretty soon he can see Snape wrestle with himself, his jaw clenched as he tapped his quill repeatedly against his own book. Finally he relented.

"Lupin, are you trying to wind me up or are you just a complete idiot?"

"What do you mean?" Remus asked, doing his best to feign confusion.

"It's streeler venom that kills horklumps. Not the mucus." Snape responded, sounding as though he was trying to make his voice as condescending as possible.

"You mean the venom you nearly got jabbed in the face with last week?"

Snape flushed. At first he looked like he was about to let loose a torrent of insults but stopped when he saw Remus' smile, which he hoped was playful and warm rather than mocking.

"Yeah. That venom," said Snape with a small smirk. They went back to working in silence before he spoke again. "Two and a half feet."

"What?"

"That's the average height a streeler grows to. Not four. That's the maximum ever recorded. How could you think that? You literally saw a field of them the other day!"

"Oh right. Of course."

Snape slammed down his quill in frustration and covered his face with his hand.

"Urrgh! You know what? Fine! I'll help you." He removed his hand from his face and grabbed Remus' book from him. "Only because I don't want my name to be associated with this drivel in any way."

"Actually I think I'm getting on just fi—" Remus started but Snape had already started crossing things out and scribbling corrections in the margin.

"This'll take too long," he said, running long fingers through his hair impatiently. "If I share my

notes with you will you leave me alone faster?"

"Probably."

With a sigh he slid over his jumbled notes. They no doubt made complete sense to Snape but all Remus sees is messy, cramped, inky-black scrawl spaced erratically about the page.

"Sorry Severus, I can't make head or tail of this." Remus said after he'd spent several minutes genuinely giving it his best effort. Snape huffed angrily before pinching the bridge of his nose to compose himself.

"Alright. Allow me to explain them for you."

To Remus' surprise, Snape actually managed to keep his voice civil as he went over his notes. Remus even suspected that he might be enjoying himself a little bit. At first he thinks it's just the chance to show off his knowledge that he likes until realises that maybe it's just being able to share it with someone. Even him.

"Thanks. That was really helpful!" Remus said truthfully. He would never have thought of so many properties for streeler slime. "What's left for me to do?"

Snape blinked at him. "Nothing. That's all I'm putting in the essay." From his stunned expression it didn't look like he was expecting Remus to offer any help.

"You've got lots of detail about streelers – way more than I could have gotten – but we need more about how to actually care for them. Spells to keep their enclosure at the right temperature, how to regrow the grass they damage, that kind of thing."

"What's all this 'we' business? I was just helping you so you'd go away!"

"Tell you what," said Remus, holding up a finger and wearing a smile. "Meet me back here this time tomorrow. I'll give you the stuff I've researched then. Up to you if you choose to use it."

When the same time the next day rolls round both boys seemed equally surprised that the other has turned up. Remus handed over his neatly written notes (colour coded and bullet pointed) to Snape with pride. He'd worked really hard on them. Even more so than normal. But Snape just eyed them suspiciously.

"How do I know this isn't just a load of rubbish you made up to get me to fail?"

"Do you really think I would waste my time doing that?" Remus felt vaguely hurt by the accusation before he realised it was completely understandable for Snape to suspect that when he imagines what James or Sirius would have done in his position.

Snape spent some time considering things before taking the notes. "Well no. *You* probably wouldn't." He looked down at them and nodded as if he'd made a decision. "I'll fact check three points at random. If they aren't complete nonsense I'll use the rest." Snape then sat down and summoned some textbooks.

"Sounds good!" Remus said, taking a seat beside him.

"What are you doing?"

“Finishing my essay. I want to get it done before the weekend.” Remus saw that Snape was still not getting it. “And my notes are here. I need them.” He finished by way of explanation.

“But you just gave them to me!”

“Yeah, to *share* Severus. C'mon budge up!”

Snape shot him a glare but surprisingly he obliged. Remus grinned at him as he dipped his quill in his ink pot. The other boy responded with an eye roll before turning to his own work.

“Merlin, you're infuriating,” he muttered under his breath. But Remus was happy to hear that the usual anger in his voice wasn't actually there.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for reading! Hoping to do at least weekly uploads.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

“I thought this class was about caring for magical creatures not mutilating them!”

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“Come along everyone!” Professor Kettleburn called out to the class after everyone had arrived.

“Today we're venturing into the forest. Just the outskirts Mr Dhillon! No need to look so alarmed!”

Severus waited until the others had formed a vague procession behind their teacher before he began to trudge along behind. He made sure to remain firmly at the back as usual. Out of nowhere Lupin fell in line beside him. Severus gave him a sideways look before rolling his eyes. He was still hyper-vigilant in Lupin's presence but since his streeler essay had come back with an 'Outstanding' he had decided he could be trusted for now.

The leaves of the forest were turning brown and many had already fallen. Autumn was definitely upon them. Although the drizzling rain, that had been continually falling for the last few days, had turned the ground into an unpleasant mulch beneath their feet rather than a cool crispness. Lupin pulled the hood of his cloak up as he turned to Severus, apparently insistent on making small talk.

“What delights do you think he'll be introducing us to today?”

“No idea,” Severus grudgingly responded. “But if we're going into the forest my guess is it'll be something big.”

“I think so too. Maybe a Snallygaster or a Thunderbird? Or even a Chimera!”

“Do you always talk so much?” Severus asked irritably.

“I'm just making conversation.”

“Well there's no need for you to feel like you have to talk to me.”

“I don't! I just...” Lupin trailed off.

Severus felt the smallest pang of guilt at his defeated expression. All he was doing was trying to be nice to him, even if it was too little far too late. As they continued to follow the group in silence Severus could hear the obnoxiously loud banter of Potter and Black a little way ahead of them. It could have been worse, he supposed, at least he wasn't paired with one of them. He looked back at Lupin, whose thin cloak wasn't doing much to shield him from the drizzle. Severus sighed and extended his rain-repelling charm so that it covered the other boy as well.

“Hey, thanks!” said Lupin, sounding surprised but pleased. “I've never been very good at that charm,” he added, grinning back at him. Severus didn't respond as he was too busy trying ignore the bizarre urge he was having to brush away the misty droplets of water still clinging to Lupin's eyelashes.

Suddenly the procession stopped and the students found themselves in the middle of a glade. Despite the lack of sunshine there was more light coming through to the circular patch of forest floor which, Severus saw, was surrounded by rowan trees already heavy with bright red berries.

“Would anyone like to hazard a guess as to what creature we are studying today?” Kettleburn asked the students, many of whom were looking around apprehensively as if some huge beast was about to come clambering through the trees. Severus saw Lily's hand shoot up as she eyed the rowans knowingly.

“Yes Miss Evans?”

“Sir, are we here to observe fairies?” She asked, the excitement in her voice obvious. Of course Lily would love this. Apparently so much so that she hadn't noticed the dirty look Emma was giving her. Fairies hadn't been considered cool among the Slytherin girls for some time.

“Right you are! Ten points to Gryffindor! But we aren't just going to be observing them today. Follow me and I'll explain!”

The students crowded in behind Kettleburn who was standing by one of the trees. On closer examination dozens of fairies could be seen all over it. Most of them were sleeping, curled up in tiny nests of leaves or snuggled in between berries, but the few that were awake began casually posing once they noticed the humans watching them.

“Look at them! The lazy things,” Kettleburn said affectionately. “Now. As you can see they are humanoid in appearance but fairies are more similar to insects. They lay their eggs on the underside of leaves.” - On cue he lifted up one of the tree's larger ones to display thick sacks of eggs. - “Once hatched, the fairy larvae enter the pupal stage at around six to ten days. They'll remain in their cocoon for another month before emerging as sexually mature adults.” - A few giggles could be heard but Kettleburn just ignored them. - “They communicate with one another by making buzzing noises of various pitch. Their intelligence is limited but they do possess some magic to defend against – yes Mr Black? Do you have a question?”

“I was just wondering, sir, doesn't Snape have an unfair advantage when it comes to studying fairies? What with him being one and all.”

Most people in the class laughed openly, even the Slytherins, though Potter and Pettigrew were the loudest obviously. Severus could feel himself growing hot with anger and embarrassment. It wasn't the first time they had called his sexuality into question but never so openly. He'd always counted himself lucky they'd never discovered just how much of that statement was actually true.

Severus glanced at Lily. She wasn't laughing but she wasn't showing any other kind of reaction either. The fact that she didn't jump to his defence really did hammer it home to Severus that she truly had abandoned him. Lily of all people would know how much the comment would hurt him. She was the only one he'd come out to after all.

To Severus' surprise the only one who looks outraged is the boy next to him. Lupin had opened his mouth and actually looked as though he was going to say something – but Kettleburn got there first.

“Twenty points from Gryffindor Mr Black. I don't tolerate bullying of any nature in my class...and I have no obligation to keep on any of my NEWT students who can't behave appropriately.”

Severus was astonished. It had been a long time since a teacher took points for the verbal stuff. That was how accepted their treatment of him had become. He even thought that some of the

Professors believed he invited it with his refusal to fit it. Severus wasn't sure whether this outcome was better or worse than the norm but he was satisfied to see that Black looked suitably embarrassed.

“Where was I? Oh yes – they possess a small amount of magic to defend against predators. Mainly the Augrey. So bear that in mind when you handle them.” Kettleburn continued, sounding angry and distracted.

“But sir, you haven't told us what we're doing with them yet.” Emma pointed out in a bored tone of voice (that Severus suspected was put on).

“Right, of course!” He answered, his usual buoyancy returning as quickly as it left. “As many of you will be aware, fairy wings are a valuable potion ingredient. Today you will be gathering them.”

“I thought this class was about *caring* for magical creatures not mutilating them!” A Gryffindor girl Severus had forgotten the name of called out, sounding scandalised. Lily also looked appalled.

“If done correctly, the removal of a fairy's wings doesn't hurt them and they grow back in a few days,” said Kettleburn calmly, as if he'd had this argument with students many times. “Part of this class is learning how to harvest things from creatures that benefit wizarding kind in the most humane and sustainable way possible.”

Their teacher goes on to demonstrate what is considered the most effective way to harvest wings from fairies. He took out his wand with his one remaining hand and performed a quick freezing charm on the nearest fairy that was sat on a cluster of berries, grooming itself. While it was frozen in motion he quickly plucked both wings from it's back with a firm tug.

“There. Not too traumatic, though I dare say the poor fellow will be quite upset once he thaws out,” Kettleburn said as he stashed the wings in a small leather pouch. “Now time for you to have a go. In your pairs please!”

Severus looked at Lupin as they wandered over to a rowan tree at the other side of the glade. His brows were knitted together in an expression of worried apprehension.

“What's wrong? Scared of a few fairies?” he asked. It was an attempt at teasing but Lupin didn't smile.

“It just bothers me.”

“What? Harvesting their wings?”

“Even that word! 'Harvesting'. They're living creatures! Not a field of crops!” Lupin's voice was becoming higher in pitch as he became more indignant.

“True. But you heard Kettleburn. It doesn't hurt them...just pisses them off a lot 'cos they're so vain,” Severus said as he watched a fairy braiding it's hair in the reflection of a raindrop.

“Yeah...but still...what right do we have to do that to them?”

Severus considered that for a moment. “Well things like this are usually for the greater good as they are for the benefit of wizarding kind but, to be fair, fairy wings are mainly used in pointless things such as the 'beautification potion’,” he said with disdain. For some reason this elicited the first smile from Lupin since Severus repelled the rain from him earlier. For some equally unknown reason this gave Severus a sense of accomplishment. “Look. I can just do it if you don't want to,” he found himself saying.

"No we're partners! I'll help," Lupin protested.

"No no, far be it from me to ask you to break your strict moral principles!" said Severus with his usual sarcasm as he took out his wand.

"Wait! Let's brainstorm the best way to do it first."

They worked out a plan. Severus would freeze half the fairies and collect their wings. Meanwhile Lupin would cast protection charms to shield him from the stinging magic of the ones that remained. It went off quite well. Apart from Lupin not taking into account that one of the fairies would lunge at Severus and bite his finger.

"Oww! Little shit!" Severus exclaimed as he flicked the small creature off him before quickly immobilising it in the air. Lupin started snorting with laughter. "Hey it's not funny! That hurt!" But Severus found he couldn't hold back a giggle at his own expense. Lupin's laughter was infectious. "You were *supposed* to protect me."

"I'm sorry! I'm sorry!" he said, still laughing. "Here let me look." Severus felt his stomach flip as Lupin took hold of his hand to gently inspect the tip of his finger. "Tssh! You're fine. There's no blood."

"Yeah, they mainly drink nectar so their teeth aren't really..." he trailed off. Black was staring at them with a hard expression on his face from the adjacent tree. Severus hadn't even noticed he was there. He snatched his hand away quickly. "Uhh...I think we have enough so--"

"Excellent work there boys!" Kettleburn had come up behind them and was giving each of them an encouraging pat on the shoulder. "I like how you left some of them intact despite it being more difficult that way. They'll be able to carry the others around for a few days! Ten points to each of your houses!" At this a fairy moved in to lift away its immobilised comrade, shaking a tiny fist at Severus and buzzing angrily.

He was feeling particularly triumphant as he and Lupin join the crowd to follow Kettleburn back to the castle once they were finished. As Potter and Black turned to glare at him he gave them a nasty smirk in return. Lupin pretended he hadn't noticed.

"You don't have to walk with me you know. Your friends seem a bit put out," Severus said, inclining his head towards Potter who gave him the finger from a safe distance. As much as he was enjoying their irritation at the situation he resented the thought of Lupin pitying him.

"Well I'm still pissed at them for earlier," said Lupin with a dark look in their direction.

"I noticed. It looked like you were actually going to say something that time."

"I was."

"What?" Severus asked, curiosity getting the better of him.

"Uhh...well I hadn't quite formed anything more eloquent than 'shut the fuck up'."

"Ha! Well that would have been better than any of your previous efforts at least. Too bad the moment passed. Seeing the perfect Gryffindor prefect hurling obscenities in the middle of class would have been quite surprising to everyone I'm sure."

Lupin responded with a smile that could almost be described as flirtatious. "Perhaps you should get to know me better. I can be quite surprising."

“Looks like I don't have much choice in the matter,” he replied, cheeks burning.

Chapter End Notes

Wizards can be pretty cruel can't they? I have no idea if the wings really grow back or not in JK's world but lets just say that they do...

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

"Fine, but if he starts his usual crap just let us know."

"Yeah, yeah."

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“See you later then, Remus.”

He turned to look at Snape just in time to see his shy smile before he scurried off towards the dungeons. The fact that it was the first time he had used Remus' first name was not lost on either of them.

“Bye Severus!” he called out to the boy's retreating figure but he didn't look back. Today had been surprisingly enjoyable. He'd expected Snape to sneer at him for his reluctance to participate, thinking he would see it as weakness, but he had been surprisingly considerate of his feelings during the lesson. Snape had done all the 'dirty work' and hadn't even been that angry when he missed the particularly vicious fairy that bit him. The way he'd glared so indignantly at the tiny creature had made Remus unable to control his laughter. He had worried Snape would take it badly at first but, thankfully, he seemed to be able to recognise when someone was laughing with him rather than at him.

As Remus stood in the courtyard, he couldn't help but think he'd got a glimpse at the Severus Snape Lily had been friends with for so long. He had found the other boy's behaviour so out of character it was almost adorable. For one bizarre moment Remus nearly flirted with him! He couldn't imagine that would have gone down well. Just then he was brought out of his reflection by a rough headlock from behind.

“Ditched your new boyfriend long enough to spend time with us?”

“Sirius. Get. Off. Me!” His friend was pressing down on him hard as Remus struggled to shake him off.

“Let go Padfoot,” James said coolly. At his direction Sirius loosened his hold. “He's got some explaining to do.”

“Me?!” Remus asked indignantly as he shook himself free of Sirius' grasp. “What about you guys? What you said was really shitty Sirius.”

“Whatever,” Sirius drawled, sounding bored. “I only said it because Prongs dared me anyway.” He added with a mischievous look towards James causing Remus to turn his glare on him. .

James raised his eyebrows in response. “What's got your knickers in such a twist this time?”

Of course Remus couldn't tell them the real reason he was so upset by the comment. That it could have just as easily been him they call names like that. Only in his case it would be accurate. Remus felt the familiar need to hide from his friends scrutiny. To say anything just to stay on their good side.

"Nothing! It's just...who do you think he's going to take it out on if you piss him off in class?"

"Looked like you were getting along just fine to me," said Sirius, a slight sneer forming across his handsome features. Remus felt his blood turn cold.

"Well excuse me for having the capacity to be civil to someone," he muttered without meeting any of their gazes.

"C'mon you lot, Snivellus isn't worth fighting about. Can we go get lunch? I'm starving!" Peter had finally decided to pitch in. He always tried to deflect any conflict when it arose between them.

The boys headed off to the Great Hall and Remus followed, trying to ignore the twisting dread he felt in his stomach. He couldn't help but look over to the Slytherin table when they entered. Snape didn't seem to be there though. As they sat down and the food appeared before them it wasn't hard for Remus to guess why he'd skipped. Flobberworm fritters were on the menu again.

"Urgh, seriously? These things again?" Sirius asked nobody in particular as he flopped one of the greyish morsels on to his plate. "They have a budget cut or something?"

"I like them! They're chewy," Peter said thickly, already tucking in. James looked at him with disgust before turning to Remus across the table. Apparently he wasn't ready to let the subject go.

"Look Moony, just because you're partners doesn't mean you have to act all nicey nicey to him." Remus started to protest but James cut him off. "Have you forgotten what he called Evans last year? Who he hangs around with these days?"

Sirius jumped in to back James up, waving his fork in Remus' direction. "Yeah, do we need to remind you what they did to those Hufflepuff first years last week? I'm pretty sure one ended up in the hospital wing."

The way Remus remembered it Snape was the one hanging back behind Mulicber who had cast the hex. Remus had recognised the look on Snape's face. It was the same one he himself had worn so often. Trying to fake it, pretending it was just a laugh, pretending he wouldn't rather be anywhere else. Perhaps they were more alike than he realised.

"Look. It is what is is. You guys just need to leave me to get on with it," muttered Remus as he stabbed at his own fritter.

"Fine, but if he starts his usual crap just let us know."

"Yeah, yeah."

Remus' good mood was completely shattered.

The following afternoon an extremely weary Remus had just emerged from a particularly complex transfiguration lesson. This year they were starting human transformation for the first time. Though Remus had plenty of experience transforming every month he was finding it was a lot more difficult to do this willingly. Professor McGonagall was already becoming increasingly frustrated with them and had kept James, Sirius and Peter behind to remind them that 'the time for messing around was over' and they needed to 'knuckle down and take things seriously' if they wanted to remain in the class. Remus had managed to make his exit before he could become guilty by association.

As he waited for them a safe distance away he spotted Snape having a rare out-of-dungeon moment. Not only was he out of the dungeon but he was also smiling! He appeared absorbed in something as he walked down the corridor. So absorbed that he didn't notice Remus and carried on straight past him. As usual, his head was pointed downward, but he seemed to be looking at something in his hand this time rather than the floor. Remus also thought there was more of an excited spring in his step.

"Hey!" Remus had called out to him before he knew it. "Severus!" he added when the boy didn't turn around straight away. At the sound of his name Snape froze before looking about warily. His eyes narrowed with suspicion when he saw Remus. "Hi," he greeted a third time as hurried up to him. "What are you looking so happy about?"

"Nothing," Snape responded automatically as he clasped whatever is in his hand more tightly. He almost looked like he was fighting the urge to hide it behind his back.

"C'mon you were practically skipping down the corridor! What's that in your hand?" Remus couldn't seem to resist prodding him.

Snape looked as though he was torn between the fear that this was some setup for a prank and the desire to tell someone about the obviously good thing that had just happened to him. The need to talk about it seemed to be winning. He opened his mouth about to tell him but stopped.

"You'll just take the piss," he stated.

"I won't I promise!" said Remus, holding up his hands as if to declare his honour.

After a final bit of hesitating Snape let some of his guard down. He waited until a gaggle of students had passed before holding up a vial of dark green potion with no small amount of pride.

"Alright, so I took those fairy wings we harv- collected to Professor Slughorn and he encouraged me to try out a new potion with them. It's only been discovered recently so it's not in any of the textbooks, not that half of them are worth the paper they're printed on, so it's kind of exciting!" Snape's black eyes were lit up and there was a passion in his voice that Remus hadn't heard before. It didn't last long though. "You think I'm a geek don't you?" he asked flatly when Remus doesn't say anything.

"No, no!" he protested. The truth was he was just enjoying seeing more of this side to Snape. "Well...maybe a bit...but in a good way! What potion is it?"

Snape narrowed his eyes at Remus again, apparently doubting whether or not he was actually interested. Remus had never been much of a potion brewer and had dropped the subject as soon as he could.

"The Girding Potion. It's supposed to, uh, increase your endurance. Should be useful when studying for exams next year," he adds by way of clarification. A joke in the poorest of taste is just

on the tip of Remus' tongue when he sees a look of pure loathing cross Snape's face. He cringed when he realised who must be behind him. He'd completely forgotten he was waiting for them in his eagerness to talk to Snape.

"Think you need to give that to Remus...so that he's able to endure your revolting presence for the rest of the year," he heard Sirius say. Sure enough his three friends were sneering at them when he turned around.

"Honestly, it's bad enough he has to put up with you during class. Do you really think he wants you bothering him with your pathetic potions in his leisure time?" James asked Snape nastily.

"Guys! Please!" said Remus, trying to diffuse the situation.

But it was too late. Snape's guard was fully back in place as he glared at the four of them. He must have thought Remus set this up! He turned around and walked quickly away from them. To Remus' horror, he saw that James had raised his wand and was aiming it at Snape's back.

"EXPELLIARMUS!"

Remus reacted without thinking and disarmed him. He stared down at his hand in surprise after he'd done it. James looked in shock, first to him, then to his own wand that was lying halfway down the corridor.

"What are you playing at Remus?!" he shouted, sounding outraged.

"What are *you* playing at?!" Remus responded with equal anger. "He didn't do anything!"

"I was trying to send him a message."

"What 'message'?"

"To stop messing with you of course!"

"We were just talking! It was me that spoke to him in the first place!" Remus was beyond angry then. He got right up into James' face as he spoke, voice rising with every word he said. It was so unlike him that James and the others actually seemed a bit frightened. James put an arm on Remus' shoulder in an effort to stop his advance.

Suddenly he was crying out in alarm as the robes covering that arm burst into flames.

"SHIT!" Sirius shouted as he quickly shot jets of water from his wand. In his panic, he was a little overzealous and it wasn't long before James was drenched from head to foot, but at least the fire was out before it could do any damage.

Snape was still pointing his wand at James, a triumphant smile on his face, as Remus turned to find the source of the spell. His smile soon disappeared when Remus turned his anger on him.

"What the FUCK, Severus?!" he bellowed as he charged up to him. "Just had to get a curse in didn't you?" How could he stoop so low after Remus finally stood up for him?

"He-he grabbed you!" Snape stammered out in surprise. It seemed as if he actually thought Remus would approve of what he'd done.

"Oh nice excuse," Remus said before giving him a hard shove, the strength of his rage overtaking him.

Snape did something unexpected then. He punched Remus square in the jaw. Snape rarely used physical violence, always preferring to use magic to attack others and defend himself, so Remus was completely taken by surprise. After a brief, dazed moment, he lunged back towards him. But Snape was ready. He grabbed hold of Remus resulting in an awkward tussle to occur between them in the middle of the corridor.

A crowd of passing students had gathered to watch. Chants of 'fight, fight, fight!' were already beginning. The rest of the marauders were too stunned to actually come and help. Snape took hold of the front of Remus' worn robes and pulled him closer so their faces were inches apart.

"You're just the fucking same as them," he snarled.

At those words Remus saw red. It felt almost like when the wolf overtook him. For all his low self-esteem and need for acceptance, sometimes Remus tried to tell himself that, yes, he was better than his friends. That he was above their coasting through lessons, their pranks, their bullying. Suddenly Snape embodied every little voice in his head that belittled and mocked him each time. The one that told him he was a coward. He broke free of his grasp and brought his arm back to finally land a blow when a loud, clipped voice filled the air.

"Boys!" Professor McGonagall had broken through the crowd and was standing before them, wearing the hardest expression he had ever seen on her face. "My office. Immediately!"

They followed her away from the crowd (that was currently uttering a chorus of 'ooooh's suggesting they were in deep trouble) up a narrow, winding staircase that lead to the first floor. Remus took in the familiar sight of McGonagall's office when they entered. He had been in that room and sat in that tartan chair many times but rarely for disciplinary purposes. Being both his head of house and his transfiguration professor she had been the ideal person for him to talk to about his own monthly metamorphosis since he started at Hogwarts.

What started with her calling him in every so often to check on his welfare turned into regular meetings where she would supply him with tea and ginger biscuits while she answered his questions on human transformation. At some point he had started confiding in her too. She would listen without judgement when he spoke about how difficult the constant hiding and lying to his classmates was. How, even though his friends were brilliant, he sometimes resented them for leading normal, happy lives. Despite all his failings she had still made him a prefect.

It was for this reason that Remus was too ashamed of himself to look her in the eye as she told them how disappointed she was to see two bright, NEWT students brawling in the corridors. That she had come to expect much better of them both. So instead he looked at Snape. He was glaring out the window, apparently more inclined to watch the quidditch practice going on outside than focus on what was going on around him.

"Well? Do you have anything to say for yourselves?" she demanded sharply after she had finished admonishing them both.

Remus cleared his throat awkwardly before speaking. "I'm sorry Professor, we...had a fight and I lost control. It won't happen again." He knew the words sounded meaningless but it was better than saying nothing.

"See that it does not Mr Lupin," she said sternly before addressing Snape. "And you Mr Snape?"

He slowly turned his gaze back to the room, the expression on his face almost as hard as McGonagall's as he said softly "Oh, I'm certain it will happen again."

“Excuse me?!”

“Your prized Gryffindor students just can't seem to stay away from me!” something inside Snape seemed to have snapped. “I've no idea what it is they're so attracted to but they can't seem to keep their hands off me,” he gave a mirthless laugh before continuing his tirade. “But I suppose I deserve it don't I professor? Being the nasty, slimy half-blood Slytherin that I am.”

McGonagall was looking as flabbergasted as Remus felt. The both of them stared as Snape, who had resumed his hard stare out the window, for several moments. Finally she spoke.

“Detention. Both of you. Tonight.”

Chapter End Notes

Yes flobberworm fritters really are a thing. My research for this fic has lead me to discover many disturbing facts.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

Severus and Remus serve their detention together.

Severus didn't get detention very often. Even though he regularly got into duels with those stuck up pratts, he was rarely the instigator and the teachers usually recognised that. Today had been different though.

He had actually felt happy when Lupin started talking to him in the corridor. Not many people stopped to chat with him these days. But then he'd seen it. That flash of fear and shame at being caught speaking to him that had shown briefly on his face. It was the same look that had been starting to show on Lily's face last year - before *that* happened - whenever her other friends rounded a corner to see them laughing together. He could already see he was losing her before he fucked things up beyond all repair.

After that he quickly turned and left. It had meant exposing his back to them, which was always a bad idea, but he needed to get away before the hurt showed on his face. Whenever they realised they were getting to him it just seemed to spur them on further. But then Lupin had done something that Severus hadn't expected. He stood up for him. Oh he'd given some half-arsed attempts in the past, that he must have known his friends would wholeheartedly ignore, but this was different. There was a conviction in his voice that Severus had never heard before. Plus he'd never gone so far as to actually disarm any of them until today.

Severus could almost tell himself that he hadn't meant to cast *Incendio* at Potter. It certainly wouldn't have been his first choice had he been thinking clearly. When he'd seen Potter grab Lupin like that an inexplicable rage overtook him. He quickly turned that rage on Lupin himself when he began shouting at him just for coming to his defence. Treating him like the scheming, plotting snake they all thought he was.

He shouldn't have punched him though. That was something Severus had concluded as he lay on his four poster, curtains drawn, arms flung over his head in frustration. They were actually just starting to get along alright. Why did those fuckers have to ruin every good thing in his life?

After she'd given them both detention, Professor McGonagall had made him stay behind longer on his own. She'd forced him to sit down, wouldn't let up until he'd taken one of her dry ginger biscuits, but there was no way he was confiding in her. Even as she pressed him, calmly but firmly, saying it wasn't like him to be physically violent or talk back to a teacher the way he had. Even when she told him she was concerned far more than she was angry. Even when tears burned the corners of his eyes and he batted them away angrily. Finally, with a sigh, she'd let him go.

Suddenly his curtains burst open causing him to lift one arm away from his face reluctantly

“Hey Snape, heard you got into a fist-fight with some Gryffindor today.” The grinning face of Avery had appeared above him followed closely by Mulciber's as always.

Severus sat up to face them with a sigh. “You know, I could have been doing anything behind these curtains...”

“Nah, we always know when you're havin' a wank Snape,” said Avery teasingly, as he pulled the curtains wide and flopped himself down on Severus' bed. “Always callin' out some mudblood's name...”

Now Severus knew he was lying. Not only were his silencing charms perfected, he'd never thought about Lily like that. He wasn't about to correct him though. Instead he gave Avery a few playful kicks in an attempt to shove him off the bed, but soon gave up.

“Snape doesn't sully himself with filth like that any more,” said Mulciber. He remained standing with his arms folded, looking down at them with a slight frown of disapproval. “Isn't that right, Sevvv?”

Severus manages to suppress a flinch at his friends talking about her like that. “You know I don't,” he replied bitterly.

“Good riddance!” Avery exclaimed, cheerfully looking up at him upside-down. “Still alright to help us with that potions essay?”

“Can't. Got detention,” he said getting up.

“Well fuck me!” Mulciber laughed as he sat himself down on his own bed next to Severus'. “The perfect little prince got detention! Nice to see you getting your hands dirty for a change.”

“Yeah, yeah. See you later.”

Avery gave him a small wave, still stretched out on Severus' bed, as he exited the dorm. He could still hear Mulciber chuckle to himself as he ascended the stone steps up to the common room before beginning the long trek to McGonagall's office. He was almost glad of the excuse to get away from them. He didn't really have much in common with those two but they were the only ones who would give him the time of day any more. Even Severus couldn't cope with complete isolation.

Lupin was already waiting outside when he arrived. Neither one of them so much as looked at the other as he knocked on the door to announce their arrival. It quickly opened and McGonagall greeted them with a stern nod. Severus expected her to tell them to enter, give them some lines to do or something, but instead she uttered a stiff “Follow me, please” and began walking. Despite their anger with each other, Lupin gave him a look of apprehension that Severus returned before they followed her down the corridor, walking quickly in order to catch up.

They followed in silence down that narrow staircase leading to the ground floor, out into the courtyard and down to the grounds. It wasn't that late but the sun was already starting to set which made it difficult to see far ahead. Still, he could tell by the size of the silhouette that the person standing down the hill must be the gamekeeper Hagrid. As they made their way over to his pumpkin patch Severus realised he was talking animatedly with someone. Someone with a distinctive slump to the side caused by owning a rather ill-fitting wooden leg.

“I'm so sorry Professor! Don't know wha I were thinkin'!”

“Not to worry, Hagrid my friend, not to worry! All will right itself I'm sure.”

As they approached, Severus could see that the person was indeed Professor Kettleburn. “Evening Minerva! And good evening to you as well boys!” he said once they arrived. Hagrid bids farewell to the professor with an another apology before retreating back to his small hut, enormous dog in tow.

“Good evening, Silvanus. Here they are. I will leave them in your capable hands.”

“Excellent! Thank-you!”

With a nod of approval, the head of Gryffindor house turned and resumed her brisk walk back to the castle. Soon all they could see was the faint glow of the *lumos* spell she had cast to light her way. Kettleburn waited until she was out of sight before turning to them.

“Heard about your fight boys. Have to say I'm very disappointed. You seemed to be getting along rather well in class the other day and I thought-”

“Sorry sir but why are we here?” Lupin asked, interrupting what could have been a very long thought.

“Well!” The usual excitement in his voice was back. “After Professor McGonagall told me what happened, I naturally told her how well you two worked together with the fairies and she thought the best thing would be for you to have a similar opportunity. And it just so happens one has presented itself!”

Severus groaned inwardly. What were they going to have to do this time?

Both he and Lupin jumped as an ear splitting shriek echoed out around them. They looked up simultaneously to see a pair of glowing yellow eyes staring down at them from up in the large tree they were standing beneath.

Severus moved back instinctively. “What is that thing?” he asked Kettleburn. He was unable to keep his voice from going up a couple of octaves in alarm. In reply Kettleburn shined a light from his wand up into the tree allowing them to see the beast better. Curled around a branch was a long feathered serpent with the head of a very angry looking bird. Its dark feathers shimmered like an oil slick where the light hit it. On its back were two large wings. They were curled in on itself but Severus guessed they would span several feet when opened. He wasn't sure exactly how big the creature was, wrapped around the tree like that, but it seemed huge.

“An Occamy?” asked Lupin.

“Indeed! Well recognised!” Kettleburn replied sounding pleased. “Ten point to Griff- oh, actually I suppose you shouldn't earn points in detention...”

“What is it doing here?!” Severus exclaimed, apparently he was the only one alarmed by the creature that was now hissing and snapping at them from up high.

“Well I managed to procure one for our next lesson. I thought I would take it to show Hagrid – he has a keen interest in magical creatures and is always eager to lend me a hand! - but unfortunately he got a bit, uh, overexcited. He only opened the door slightly for a quick peer and the dashed thing just slithered out! Poor fellow feels terrible,” said Kettleburn with a look back over his shoulder to Hagrid's hut. He turned back to face them and indicated up into the tree with a motion of his wand. “Made a beeline straight for that tree and won't come down! I believe it has nested. I'm sure I don't have to tell you boys why that's bad news.”

Severus really didn't like where this was going. “So what do you want us to do about it?”

“She's got to be moved somehow and that's up to you two to figure out! I'm just here to observe...and to step in if things get particularly dangerous of course.”

This didn't comfort Severus much. He was acutely aware that Professor Kettleburn's idea of what

constituted as dangerous what a lot different to his own. Also he really wasn't ready to collaborate with Lupin on anything just yet. The other boy didn't seem to feel the same way though; he turned to Severus and started to make a plan.

“Okay so Occamys are extremely territorial and very aggressive when threatened. I think the best thing for us to do is-”

“*Petrificus Totalus!*”

Severus sent the curse flying towards the creature before Lupin could finish. It would have been a direct hit...had the thing not shrank to the size of an acorn to fit into a small knot in the branch.

Lupin gives him a look of exasperation. “If you'd let me *finish* I would have told you they could do that. That's why we need to-”

But Lupin was interrupted again as the Occamy burst out of the tree to its full, terrible size. It shrieked and snapped its sharp beak as it flew straight towards Severus.

“*Stupefy!*” he shouted, but the creature twisted its long body through the air and he couldn't get a hit. Almost immediately it was upon him, wrapping its serpentine body around his legs so that he fell, dropping his wand in the process. All Severus could do was cover his head with both arms and scream.

“*Impedimenta!*”

The creature slowed just before it could bring that razor sharp beak down on Severus. It released its tight grip and slithered off him but couldn't fly off due to the curse binding it. He watched in a daze as the Occamy struggled in panic, trying desperately to get off the ground and back to the safety of the tree. He knew how it felt. It was the same curse Potter used on him last year.

Lupin snapped him out of it by shouting his name. “Severus! Do you have any empty vials?” His guess was correct. Severus always carried a couple of spare vials in his pocket in case he happened to come across any interesting ingredients. But then he'd already shown Lupin what a potions geek he was earlier...

Severus nodded and took out a small glass bottle. As soon as he uncorked it the Occamy wriggled inside, becoming minuscule again. He quickly replaced the lid and held the bottle out before him. It felt only slightly heavier than before. The creature was snugly taking up all the space inside but it didn't look squashed or uncomfortable. It did, however, look just as murderous as before as it stared angrily back at him.

“Are you okay?” Lupin asked with concern as he hurried over to him.

“Yeah, you stopped it before it could tear me to shreds,” Severus admitted. “Thanks,” he added awkwardly.

“You're welcome. Well done for trapping it!”

“It was your idea.”

“I wasn't sure it would work but Occamys instinctively shrink into the smallest spaces they can to hide when threatened.”

Severus eyed the now tiny creature with disdain. “I think it was the one threatening me. How do you know so much about them anyway?”

"We lived near a flock of them in Wales for a time when I was a kid. Found one hiding in my shoe once!"

"You don't sound Welsh," said Severus. It was more of a question than a statement.

"Me and my parents we, uh, move around a lot." Lupin suddenly became very interested in the ground at his feet. Severus can guess the reason why his parents wouldn't want to keep him in one place for too long. It was only after they slipped back into silence that Severus remembered the current tension between them. The adrenaline had made it disappear for a time.

"Well done boys! That was some excellent work!" Kettleburn boomed from a safe distance away. Severus had forgotten he was there. He was dusting himself off after getting up from casually leaning against one of the enormous pumpkins.

"Why didn't you 'step in' back there?!" Severus asked him, outraged.

"I could see that Mr Lupin had the situation under control."

Severus made a disparaging noise. "I'm surprised the thing isn't carrying me off to feed me to its young as we speak with you two to rely on," he grumbled. "Hey! Where are *you* going?!" he called out to Lupin who, at Severus' words, had bounded off towards the tree the Occamy was nesting in and started to climb the lower branches.

"I just want to check something!" he shouted back over his shoulder before turning to inspect the nest the creature was half way through building. "Erm...Professor? There are eggs here."

"Really? My word! No wonder she was so keen to nest!" Kettleburn exclaimed jollily, coming over beside Severus to peer at the creature in the vial.

"You're an expert in the field of magizoology but you couldn't tell it was due to lay eggs?" he asked his teacher. Severus wouldn't normally speak to him like that but he was still annoyed.

"Well...I didn't exactly get a good look at her before she took off. This changes everything! We must take them to the forest!"

"Seriously?!"

"Not you boys. You've done more than enough! Myself and Hagrid will go. Fetch the eggs down for us, would you Remus? That's a good lad!"

"Is Headmaster Dumbledore going to be alright with you introducing a dangerous new species into the forest?" Severus asked sceptically as they watched Lupin carefully levitate the nest full of silver eggs down before cradling it in his arms.

"Oh they're far less dangerous than most of the things in there! Dumbledore will understand. Anyway, I've always said it's better to ask for forgiveness than permission...come along then!" he continued after Lupin had reached them. "Be very careful with those eggs Remus, and Severus, keep a tight hold on her. Once that curse wears off she's not going to want to stay put for long!"

So the three of them made their way over to Hagrid's hut. The Occamy was already starting to struggle and Severus had to hold the lid of the vial tightly in place. It was getting very upset now it believed its eggs were in danger. Though thankfully its shrieks couldn't be heard through the glass. Lupin was carrying the eggs with such care he might have laid them himself. For some reason Severus found this adorable. Though despite his care he stumbled slightly when he caught Severus watching him.

Once the Occamy and its eggs are safely back in its cage a relieved gamekeeper and an excited Professor head off into the forest. Though, not before Kettleburn has piled more praise on them and assured them that their detention was fully completed. After they were gone the boys began their walk back to the castle together. It took him some time but Severus broke the silence first.

“Thanks for saving me from getting my eyes pecked out...and...I'm, uh, sorry I hit you,” he said quickly. “That's not...I'm not usually...” This was more difficult than he thought it would be. Thankfully Lupin saved him.

“No I'm sorry! I shoved you first...and I'm pretty sure I got a hit in eventually,” he said with a half smile.

“My nose may never be the same.”

Lupin laughed causing Severus' stomach to flip the same way it did when he'd taken his hand in class the other day. Oh no. This wasn't happening.

“You know, I think we make a pretty good team at this whole magical creature business,” said Lupin.

“I'm sure one day we will be famous magizoologists travelling the world together,” said Severus sarcastically.

Lupin chuckled again. “Does that mean I get to keep being your partner?”

“If I get to keep being your damsel in distress.”

Flirting with a Marauder? Seriously? What kind of masochist was he? *Guess what guys, Snivelly really is queer and he wants to shag me!* Or maybe not? It was hard to tell in the twilight but it looked like Lupin was actually blushing.

“Maybe you'll rescue me one day,” he said with a wink as they parted ways. One to the dungeons, the other to the tower.

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Snape suggests a study session. Remus works through his feelings about him.

Chapter Notes

WARNINGS: I get a little descriptive about Remus' werewolf transformation. Also the end of the chapter is kind of NSFW!

Unsurprisingly for both of them, their next creature lesson has the class traipsing after Kettleburn into the forest again. They walked for a good distance before coming to an abrupt stop under a tree that was, to Remus' eyes, completely indistinguishable from the rest of them. The two of them hang back while the rest of their classmates 'ooh' and 'ahh' over the swooping Occamy. Snape had had enough of them to last a lifetime. Remus didn't mind though as the boy kept him entertained with a variety of sarcastic comments about the lesson.

If his friends noticed he was enjoying himself they didn't show it. The four of them were still on speaking terms but just barely. Remus never would have expected Snape would have apologised to him before they did! James and Sirius still maintained that they did what they did for Remus' own good; and that Snape couldn't be trusted. Peter just hung back awkwardly whenever the topic arose, the way he usually did when things were serious and there was a possibility of him taking a side.

"He fucking hit you, Moony! How can you stand to be around him?" James had said when his frustration with Remus had boiled over.

"Yeah, I hit him too remember?" Remus had countered for the fourth time. "Look, I told you. He's apologised, I've apologised, we've moved on. Can you please just leave it?"

It was because he was still angry with them that Remus had instantly said yes to the study session Snape suggested when the lesson was over. 'While that thing is still horribly fresh in our minds,' he had said with a grimace. Snape actually volunteering to spend time with him? They had come a long way fast! When he realised he was looking forward to it Remus had to admit to himself that things had moved on from simple guilt alleviation. He was still contemplating their relationship while he fussed over his hair in the mirror later that evening. The similarity between him and James had not escaped him, though he tried not to make too many comparisons about their situations. When he was finally satisfied, he set off to meet Snape in the library.

Remus eventually found him, not in his usual dark corner, but sitting casually in one of the big leather reading chairs towards the back of the enormous room. Snape had his sketchbook on his knees and was curled around it, pencil moving with ease, multiple textbooks with pictures of Occamy spread out on the low table in front of him. He nodded in acknowledgement as Remus approached and began unpacking his own materials.

"I suppose we should be thankful that winged monstrosity ended up in the forest," he drawled by

way of greeting. "I wouldn't fancy hanging around long enough to draw it from life."

Was it Remus' imagination or had Snape made more of an effort on his appearance also? He'd tied back his long hair, something Remus rarely saw him do, and he had on a shirt that seemed to fit him well. (So well, Remus suspected it wasn't actually his. Most of Snape's clothes were as shabby and worn as his own.) He briefly thought how Snape was oddly handsome when he wasn't hiding behind strands of greasy hair. Which wasn't actually looking that greasy any more come to think of it...

"Sounds like you bear it more of a grudge than it does you," said Remus with a playful smile when he was finally set up.

"Oh my capacity to hold a grudge is enormous."

Remus didn't think he meant him. At least he hoped not.

Snape was surprisingly chatty while they worked. Topics were neutral and safe; what was going on in classes the other wasn't taking, how difficult arithmancy was this year, teachers they did and didn't like. Remus was surprised to learn that Snape wasn't exactly Professor Slughorn's number one fan despite being a prized member of the 'Slug Club.'

"The way he uses people doesn't really bother me...but does he have to be so obvious about it? He has no subtlety," he said causing Remus to be shushed by Madam Pince a second time for laughing too loudly.

Remus sheepishly went back to his work. He had long since given up trying to get his Occamy to look like the real thing. He'd started trying to add detail to the feathers but had given up in frustration, settling on lazy sideways 'U' shapes for the lower half of the body. He held it up for Snape to see with exaggerated pride.

"What do you think? I bet Kettleburn will frame it for his office."

Snape looked up to assess it briefly, right hand still moving gracefully across his own page as he did some final shading. "Stunning," he said. "I don't think flobberworms have feathers though..."

"Ha ha. Let's see yours then."

"It's not finished."

"Of course. Wouldn't want to interrupt your artistic process now."

A half-smile graced Snape's face as he continued to draw. Remus busied himself with labelling his own Occamy. For all his joking, he knew Kettleburn would find something about it to heap praise upon. Snape was still working away long after Remus was finished. He could have gone back to the common room but he didn't really want to. He decided it was time to tell Snape what he'd probably already figured out...what with full moon approaching.

"So listen, I won't be in class next week. I'm sure you can guess the reason why..."

Snape gave him a brief moment of full eye contact then. Thankfully Remus didn't think he needed to elaborate further judging by how unfazed he looked.

"I suspected as much. How ever will I cope on my own?"

"Sorry."

“So you should be. You really should be thinking about *my* discomfort at this time.”

Remus smirked. He'd known Snape would deflect awkward conversations with sarcasm but he hadn't missed the unspoken sympathy in that comment. Snape had witnessed Remus' 'discomfort' first hand after all. Heard him screaming as his bones cracked and limbs elongated. Seen the sharp claws burst through his skin. Though he probably hadn't had much time to appreciate the pain Remus was in as he would soon have had a fully formed, snarling werewolf charging towards him.

He'd always wanted to know why Snape had never told anybody about his condition. James and Sirius thought he was just saving it for after graduation, so the threat of being expelled was no longer there, but Remus didn't think so. He had been wanting to ask for a while now. It finally felt like the right time.

“Why have you never told anyone about me?”

Snape stopped abruptly, pencil hovering in mid air. For a second those black eyes were wide with surprise before he quickly reverted back to feigned nonchalance.

“You know why. Dumbledore-”

“Don't give me that! You and I both know there would be an outcry if he tried to expel you,” Remus said as he leaned in closer to Snape, who quickly cast the muffliato charm, even though nobody seemed to be around. Remus still kept his voice a barely audible whisper as he continued. “Most parents would call you a hero for protecting their children from a dangerous beast. So why?”

Snape was quiet. He was either taking time to consider what he was going to say or he was too uncomfortable with Remus being so close to speak. It couldn't be helped though. Remus wasn't about to let five years of hiding be for nothing by having someone hear him blabbing to Snape in the library. Anyway, being this close was surprisingly not unpleasant, for Remus at least.

“Pity?” Remus prompted when he could no longer stand the length of time it apparently took for Snape to vocalise his feelings.

“Not pity,” he said quickly, before going back to speaking with measured caution. “More like...admiration.” - Remus scoffed but one glance at Snape's expression told him the boy was genuine - “You haven't let it make you bitter,” Snape's gaze held after he finished his train of thought. The words *not like me* lingered unspoken.

Remus felt himself becoming embarrassed. He moved back and looked away awkwardly.

“Heh, maybe I'm just good at hiding it,” he said, rubbing the back of his reddening neck.

But Remus knew that the things life had thrown at him – the prejudice, the hiding, the shame – could have made him twisted and angry if it wasn't for the love of his parents, the support from Dumbledore and the kindness of his friends. Snape didn't have those things. At least he didn't think so. Remus didn't know the details of Snape's home life but he suspected it was less than ideal. (If there was any truth in the hints that he'd heard Lily drop to her friends in the common room whenever they asked why Snape was...the way he was.) Not only had his time at Hogwarts been marred by bullying, he was in a house where he was looked down on for his blood status and sneered at for his obvious lack of wealth. It wasn't really any surprise that he gravitated towards darker and darker things in order to try and impress his peers. Remus knew how frightening the prospect of isolation was.

“Well, either way you seem to cope with it well. I'm not sure if I could...” he trailed off, looking

down at his drawing but not really seeing it. Remus suspected he was considering, probably not for the first time, what would have happened if he had been bitten that night. Another wave of guilt washed over him. But Snape had already snapped himself out of his reflections. "Anyway, I'm finished," he said matter-of-factly.

"Finally! Let's see it then," Remus held out his hand expecting Snape to hand his book over. Instead he began to carefully tear out the page. For some reason he seemed nervous. He hesitated before handing it over.

What Remus saw when he took the page was a beautifully detailed drawing of an Occamy. It had been enchanted so that it moved gracefully around the page, occasionally snapping its jaw, underneath which he had written '*razor-sharp beak of death*'. The rest of the labelling was of a similar fashion – '*disgusting slimy feathers*', '*glowing eyes that can pierce a man's soul*', '*do these things even have feet? my sources are conflicting and I was too busy being mauled to death to notice*' – what really made Remus laugh, though, were the two small, crudely drawn figures at the bottom of the page. One was of a princess in a medieval gown, with a cone-shaped hennin and a very prominent nose, swooning dramatically. The other was of a knight in armour, with a scar on his face, brandishing a tiny sword at the Occamy. The figures were labelled '*damsel in distress*' and '*knight in shining armour*' respectively and underneath Snape had scrawled '*picture to exact scale*.'

"Wow. Outstanding," said Remus once he'd finally composed himself – and earned his third 'shush' from Madam Pince – "I'm sure it'll be just how Kettleburn remembers it!"

Snape gives him a shy look before saying, "That one's not for Kettleburn...it's for you. A token for saving my life," he added sarcastically.

"But what are you going to hand in?" Remus asked. Snape could easily re-label the drawing and hand it in for top marks. But he turned the page of his sketchbook to reveal another good, but hastily drawn Occamy, accurately labelled this time.

"Did this one earlier," he said, doing his best to sound casual. "You can keep that one...or throw it on the fire when you get back to your common room. I'll never know."

"Are you kidding? I'm going to treasure this forever!"

Snape's pale face definitely turned a shade of pink then. "Yes, yes I'm sure." He waved a hand dismissively at Remus as he began to stow his books in his battered leather bag. "Just don't read too much into it...and don't show any of your little friends either."

"Don't worry, I don't think any of them quite have the eye for art like this."

Snape's face breaks into a genuine smile at that as he looks down at him before leaving. For some reason it makes Remus feel strangely elated.

"Well, it's been a pleasure as always Remus. Until next time," said Snape before he hurried out the library.

Remus was wearing a smile of his own as he watched him go. He looked at the drawing a final time before sliding it carefully between the pages of his own sketchbook. It was astonishing that Snape had spent all that time doing this just for him. Remus had always known he must have some sense of humour, the number of times he'd seen him and Lily laughing together, he hadn't quite imagined this though.

The common room was in full swing by the time he made it back. James, Sirius and Peter were

sitting together at a table near the centre of the room, playing wizard chess. Well, James and Sirius were playing, Peter was watching on the sidelines. He let out a cheer as James' knight decimated Sirius' rook. He was also the only one to acknowledge him as he approached.

“Hi Moony! Where've you been?”

“You know me. Studying as usual.”

“Alone?” asked Sirius, not taking his eyes from the board as he plotted his next move.

“Uh, yeah...why?” Remus lied. It wasn't that he was embarrassed about studying with Snape - he just really didn't feel like another argument.

James turned his attention from the game and looked at Remus for the first time since he returned. He sighed and ruffled his hair before saying what he had obviously been rehearsing in his head for some time.

“Listen, mate, I'm sorry about the other day. I was out of order.”

“Yeah, you sort of were,” agreed Remus.

“I'm just worried,” he continued. “You can be too nice sometime Moony, y'know?... and we all know what that greasy snake is like...I wouldn't put it past him to use you just to get to us.”

“Oh he's definitely plotting something,” said Sirius darkly. His queen moved several paces on the board to stab James' knight in the back with a tiny silver dagger.

James let out a hiss of frustration at the development before turning back to Remus. “Look, obviously we know what he's got on you. If you think it's best to keep him on your good side we'll respect your judgement,” - he kicked Sirius under the table - “Won't we?”

“Ow! Yes! I'll leave dear old Snivelly alone Moony, much as it pains me to do so,” Sirius said, rolling his eyes.

“Thanks guys. He's actually alright...y'know...when you give him a chance,” Remus said tentatively.

James scoffed. “Mate, if Evans couldn't convince me of that you're not going to be able to I'm afraid!”

Point taken.

Remus sat down to watch his friends finish the game but found he couldn't keep track of the conversation. It was true that he'd been terrified of what Snape could have done to him as revenge against them all. That terror was what drove the multiple apologies he'd tried to make to him last year even more than the guilt about what could have happened. Perhaps Snape had sensed this and that was why he had rejected every single one. But Snape didn't look down on him...he actually admired him? He felt even more guilty that pity was the main reason he had wanted to get closer to Snape through their shared lessons. It wasn't the reason he wanted to get closer to him now though. He genuinely wanted to be his friend.

“What do you keep smiling about?” Peter asked him, as Sirius loudly taunted James after an impressive checkmate.

“Nothing in particular. Just glad things are back to normal,” he lied to his friends for the second

time that evening. "Anyway, I'm off to bed. I'm knackered."

They waved him off before setting up other match. Just as he reached the bottom of the boy's staircase he heard a girl call out his name. Suddenly Lily was there, tugging on his sleeve to pull him into a corner to talk.

"Remus, can I speak to you for a minute?"

"Uhh, yeah sure. What is it?"

"I wanted to speak to you about Sev – about Severus – I know you've been spending time with him."

"Well, I kind of have to remember? We're paired up. It's going fine though so don't worry!"

"That's exactly why I am worried. See, we were friends for a long time, but he- he's gotten into some pretty dark stuff and...well...just be careful okay?"

"Um, thanks?"

Remus felt a rising anxiety as he ascended the stairs which stayed with him while he got ready for bed. His racing thoughts kept him awake. Could Snape really be so manipulative? The sorting hat's words kept running through his mind. *Those cunning folk use any means to achieve their ends.* Snape certainly made it clear last year that he wanted revenge. Remus remembered him scrambling on the ground whispering 'you wait' at his friends.

But he'd seemed so genuine. Surely nobody could be that good an actor. Remus remembered the drawing, the half smile, those black eyes that seemed to see right into him. Finally he relaxed. He was only vaguely aware of his friends coming to bed as he drifted off to sleep.

Remus was walking through the forbidden forest. It was night but the moon was so full he could clearly make out every twig on the ground beneath his feet. Wait. If the moon was full then why was he still...him? It didn't matter right now. He had to get those eggs. Kettleburn wanted them back. Said they were too valuable – Remus never should have moved them! He didn't want to take them back but he had to. He had to, he had to, he had to. But he couldn't find the tree!

A screech that filled Remus with dread reverberated through the still night air. Every muscle in his body told him to turn back. But he couldn't. He'd found it.

The Occamy was enormous. It was already watching Remus from up in its nest, staying menacingly silent now. Remus was almost frozen in fear by its terrible glowing eyes. But wait. Someone was up there in the gigantic nest with it. Severus! Of course he was there. They were partners. The Occamy was curled around him as if protecting him. Severus hadn't noticed him yet. He was running his fingers through the Occamy's shimmering feathers, staring at them as though mesmerised.

Remus was about to call out to him when the Occamy's jaw began to dislocate. It stretched its mouth impossibly wide as it towered over Severus, moving as if to swallow him whole. All the while it never stopped staring at Remus.

"*Avada Kedavra!*" Remus screamed. A flash of green light and the Occamy was dead. It happened so fast Remus felt sick. The beast crashed down through the trees to the forest floor, taking the nest and Severus with it.

He heard Severus before he saw him. The boy had thrown himself over the body of the Occamy and was heaving with sobs of pure anguish. Remus reached out a hand to comfort him but Severus turned and was upon him in an instant, grabbing the front of his robes and screaming at him in rage.

"How could you do that?"

"I-I had to! To save you!"

Severus pushed him down onto the fallen leaves that were covering the ground. He threw himself down on top of Remus, pinning his arms at his sides.

"I didn't want to be saved," he said, voice hitching as the tears started to flow again.

His face was so close, the moonlight made him beautiful, all Remus wanted to do was comfort him. So he pressed his mouth against his. Severus responded. What started out as tender soon became rough and desperate. Severus had released his arms, allowing Remus grasp a handful of Severus' hair in one hand and pull his hips in closer with the other.

Soon Severus was thrusting against him. It felt incredible...but they shouldn't be doing this. It wasn't safe here. But neither of them could stop. Severus was moaning into his neck. Remus was calling out the other boy's name...

Remus was stroking himself as he woke up. A sense of wrongness hit him but he was so close he couldn't stop. His head was still so full of that dream. Full of Severus. He was all he thought about as he came with a stifled groan.

As he fully regained his senses, he flung his head into the pillow to muffle another groan, of shame this time. It was just a stupid dream, it didn't mean anything, he told himself as he muttered a cleaning charm. But he could still feel Severus' lips on his, still hear the moans of pleasure his mind had made him produce.

Oh Merlin, had he said anything in his sleep? Everything in the dorm was quiet except for the sounds of regular breathing and an unidentifiable snoring. Remus was too scared to peer out behind his curtain to check if anyone was awake. Instead he lay down and began the task of getting back to sleep. One he knew he was destined to fail at.

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Severus goes to class without Remus and gets paired with the worst possible person.

Chapter Notes

WARNINGS: references to domestic abuse, references to Nazism

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Severus couldn't help grinning to himself like an idiot as he entered the dungeons. He wasn't sure quite what possessed him to draw that ridiculous picture for Lupin but once he'd got the idea he just sort of ran with it. He hadn't expected to have the bravery to actually hand it over, but after their frank conversation, he had managed to summon the confidence. Though he couldn't help cringing slightly at what he'd said.

'I admire you?' Merlin, Severus you might as well have asked him to come home and meet your dad before heading off hand in hand to the Cokeworth pride parade.

Severus laughed out loud at the absurdity of the thought. He wondered who would give him a beating first? Potter or his dad? At least he would be likely to survive the one Potter would give him...

He tried to make his face impassive as he entered the common room. Apparently he didn't do a very good job of it though because the first thing he heard was Avery shouting across the room asking what he was 'looking so smug' about.

"Moved on to a new girl already?" he teased. "Is that why you wanted to borrow my shirt?"

"Doubt it was for a girl," said Mulciber snidely, causing Rosier to let out his usual high pitched giggle. Severus raised an eyebrow at them but didn't say anything. Mulciber was more perceptive than he looked; he had to keep on his good side. "Got an owl from your ex-boyfriend today actually!" he went on, waving a letter written in an elegant hand and bearing the familiar seal of the Malfoy house.

"Lucius? You know...I would actually consider it just on his hair alone."

That earned the greater number of laughs from his friends. Sometimes the best way to hide was out in the open.

Mulciber ignored the comment. "He wants us to meet him and Bella next week at the Hogs Head. I'm sure you know what for..."

That dark wizard he was always going on about before he graduated. It had to be. The whole thing sounded a little...cultish...to Severus. However he had to admit Lucius had relayed some good

points; muggles were weaker than them, they were always at war with each other, they were destroying the planet – and witches and wizards were the ones that were in hiding? The ones living like second class citizens? The ones looked down upon and mocked if they dared present themselves out in the open? Then again, if his father was any example of what muggles were like it was no wonder.

The more he thought about it the angrier Severus became. It just didn't make sense! They could make the world a better place overnight! The muggles would be on their knees thanking them. Lily just hadn't got it. She'd said that Lucius sounded like one of those muggle Nazis her prissy sister had learned about at her muggle school. The ones his father would sometimes mutter 'had the right idea.' As if there could be any comparison.

Severus knew he would have so much to offer the cause. He wasn't afraid of 'dark magic.' All magic was a means to an end after all. It was about the intentions behind it. All while he considered this Severus pushed down the voice that told him he just wanted to belong to something; to be respected.

“So...you in?” Avery asked him, eyes lit up with excitement.

“I suppose so.”

He'd hear what Lucius had to say.

The next few days passed by uneventfully. Severus noticed that Lupin looked evermore tired and withdrawn in the days leading up to the full moon. He told himself that must be the reason Lupin seemed to be avoiding him and not that he'd come to the conclusion he was some creepy weirdo like most other people did. The boy still managed to give him a weary smile whenever they passed in the corridors so Severus wasn't too worried. Being out of the dungeons was easier than it used to be. The fact that he hadn't heard a peep from Potter or Black since the *Incendio* incident had made him finally start to relax a bit. Them leaving him alone had to be Lupin's doing. He had his suspicions they were just biding their time though. So he was still worried about his first Creature lesson on his own.

It wasn't the marauders he needed to worry about though. Kettleburn had, for Lupin's benefit Severus suspected, set them the rather boring task of sorting out knarls from hedgehogs. The danger of being jabbed with pins was the least of Severus' concerns, however. Their Professor had, in his infinite wisdom, insisted that he work alongside Lily and Emma.

“Miss Evans! Miss Edgecombe! You don't mind if this strapping young man joins you, do you?” he'd said before sauntering off without giving anyone time to object.

The man obviously thought he and Lily had just had a typical teenage 'falling out' rather than the more complex issue it really was. It felt like a chasm of distance and ill-feeling had formed between them. The nature of the task meant that the two of them had to speak for the first time in months. Their interactions were cold and stiffly polite and somehow it hurt a hundred times more than not speaking at all. But the very worst and most excruciating part had been when Emma started flirting with him in front of her.

Severus harboured no illusions that she was actually interested in him. She must have thought there had been something more than friendship between him and Lily. The rumour had followed them throughout their time at Hogwarts since first year. Severus never went out of his way to correct people (much to Lily's annoyance). It was, after all, the perfect cover. Knowing Emma she would find it amusing to upset Lily by flirting with her 'ex.' After too much 'accidental' touching and bad jokes, that Severus was losing the will to even smile at, she made her move.

“Severus, I was wondering,” she began, twirling a lock of fair hair around her finger and doing the perfect impression of coy. “Would you like to go with me to Hogsmeade next weekend?”

Would she really go that far just to piss off Lily? Her plan wasn't exactly working judging by the girl's lack of reaction as she offered one of the animals some tinned cat food. When it happily accepted it she could safely determine that it was a hedgehog. Maybe Emma really did fancy him? She could always cancel on him at the last minute if she got a better offer he supposed. Severus couldn't risk it though.

“Sorry I'm already planning on going with someone else,” he said quickly, hoping that would be the end of it. It wasn't of course.

“Who?” she asked, apparently offended that Severus wasn't jumping at the chance to go with her.

“Remus.”

The name had slipped from Severus' mouth before he knew it. Lily looked stunned. She stared straight at Severus so that they shared the first full eye contact in Merlin knew how long.

“Seriously?!” Emma asked incredulously, turning Severus' attention back to her.

“Uhh yeah...we've sort of been...hanging out lately...” Severus had the childish urge to add 'not in a gay way' but managed to stop himself.

“Okaaaaay.”

Emma lost interest after that and wandered off on the pretext of getting more bedding but really to gossip to the other Slytherin girls. About him no doubt. Severus and Lily were left alone with the hedgehogs and knarls.

“Are you really going with Remus?” she asked suspiciously.

“Just said so didn't I?” he snapped. Severus had little time to appreciate that she was actually speaking in full sentences to him. He needed to think about how he was going to get out of this mess.

“Look Severus,” - oh he'd been demoted to 'Severus' now? At least it wasn't 'Snivellus' this time - “I don't know what you're up to but just leave Remus alone. He hasn't done anything to you.”

“You honestly think I'm – urgh never mind!”

Severus could feel the anger towards her that he'd pushed deep down start to rise to the surface. How could she think so badly of him now? They had been friends since they were kids. Was what he'd said to her really so unforgivable? Severus had certainly been called worse over the years. He'd tried so so hard to make it up to her...

Suddenly a sharp pain shot through the side of his hand. The animal he was angrily thrusting food into the face of must have been a knarl because it had lunged forward and bit him with its

deceptively sharp teeth. The creatures were extremely distrusting of anyone that offered them food. Severus cursed as blood started to run down his arm. Kettleburn hobbled over to them at the commotion.

“Oh dear Mr Snape, I think you better head to the hospital wing and get that properly disinfected. Miss Evans, could you assist him?”

“I'm fine on my own!” he said, a little too aggressively. Clutching his hand, Severus stalked off back to the castle before he could be told otherwise.

“Very well but please be more careful in future Severus!” Kettleburn called after him but he didn't look back.

Later that night, Severus was lying awake in bed with the events of the day playing on his mind. His right hand still throbbed with pain. How was he going to get out of the mess he'd made for himself? Remus would be back tomorrow wouldn't he? Maybe he could get up early and catch him on his way back from the shack and ask him to go with him to Hogsmeade then. No...that really would be creepy and weird. He'd just have to hope that he caught him before Lily or whoever else asked him about it first. What if he said no though? He probably would say no.

Severus couldn't be bothered casting a silencing charm so instead he used his pillow to muffle his groan of frustration. Why hadn't he just said he was going with Avery or something? Why was Lupin the first person that jumped into his head. The realisation that he had developed a full-blown crush on him hit Severus like a slap in the face. He groaned louder this time. Merlin, he was pathetic. The first boy so show him a bit of kindness and he wanted to kiss him. Oh my God he wanted to kiss Remus Lupin.

This was bad. It needed to be nipped in the bud right away. It shouldn't be a problem. Severus was rather good at suppressing his feelings. He'd watched Lucius snog Narcissa plenty of times without outwardly batting an eye after all. This self-reassurance was enough to finally allow him to relax a little.

He must have fallen asleep at some point because Severus had a dream. In it he revisited the tunnel as he often did when he slept. He had poked the knot in the tree just like Black told him. He'd said Remus was there; that he needed to see him.

“You have to go to him,” Black had said, placing a hand on Severus' shoulder as if they were friends.

It didn't feel right but he went anyway. He made his way down the dank tunnel. Usually at this point the werewolf would appear but this time he made it down to the end and stepped into the abandoned house. Sure enough, Remus was there standing in the corner of the run down room. He smiled a kind smile at Severus and beckoned him over.

“You came,” he said once they were standing face to face. Severus wanted to ask him what was going on, why he had wanted to meet here, why he was still human when the light of the full moon was streaming through part of the dilapidated ceiling. But before he could Remus kissed him. He placed his hands either side of Severus' face and pulled him close. His lips were so soft. Severus put one hand on the wall behind his head while sliding the other under Remus' shirt to rest on the small of his back. He let out a moan when their tongues met and Remus began to kiss him more fiercely.

Severus was just beginning to lose himself in Remus when he abruptly pulled away. The smile he was wearing suddenly turned malicious. He pushed Severus into the centre of the room. Potter's invisibility cloak fell to the floor to reveal the rest of the cackling marauders. They rushed forward to grab hold of him. Potter and Black had an arm each while Pettigrew held on to his torso from behind. He screamed at them to let go but they just continued to laugh and jeer at him.

“I'll let you have him this time Moony,” Potter said to Remus, though he whispered the words straight in Severus' ear.

Severus could only stare in horror as Remus walked forward to stand under the ray of moonlight coming down through the ceiling like a spotlight. Still wearing the same grotesque smile he transformed into the beast in front of him. Though this time there was no pain. This time Remus relished it. Soon he was no longer Remus at all.

As the beast stalks towards him, lips pulled back over canine teeth in a snarl, Severus began to scream. He shouted Remus' name over and over hoping he could somehow get through to him. But when he felt the hot breath against his face he knew it was futile. He closed his eyes so that all he could hear was the laughter of the three boys still holding on to him.

Severus woke with a start. He was panting and covered in a cold sweat. Judging by how dry his mouth felt he thought it likely he had been shouting in his sleep. He just hoped none of his dorm mates had heard. Probably not. Mulciber snored so most of them cast noise repelling charms around their beds anyway.

He got out of bed and slipped barefoot up the stone steps to the common room. There was no way he was getting back to sleep now. As he stared into the glowing embers of the dying fire he tried to shake off the lingering sense of fear the dream had left him with. He knew what it was trying to tell him. That his feelings for Remus were dangerous.

Chapter End Notes

This update was later than I'd hoped cos I went on to night shift and it slows my brain down! Also I promise that is the end of the cliché dream sequences :D

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

The Hogsmeade trip arrives.

Chapter Notes

WARNING: panic attack

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Remus returned to his dormitory after the full moon as he always did; exhausted, bruised, scratched, emotionally drained, and slightly irritable. Only this time he was carrying with him an additional feeling – confusion. His friends had accompanied him last night as they always did these days. Even Sirius, despite things still being rocky between them. He wouldn't let their disagreement over who Remus chose to associate with get in the way of his need for excitement now would he? Remus chastised himself for thinking that way about him. Reminded himself he would still be alone and tormented each month if he didn't have such kind and brave friends. He thought back to the previous night.

“So...what's this we hear about you going to Hogsmeade with Slytherin's greasiest next week?”

It was late evening and they had been sitting chatting with him in the shack prior to his transformation as usual. Sirius had just finished relaying a funny story about that day's transfiguration lesson (Peter's ratty teenage moustache was still pink) when he decided to spring the question on him.

“What?” he replied.

“You and Snivellus. Madam Puddifoot's I take it? Candles? Staring lovingly into each others eyes?”

“I don't know what you're talking about.”

A satisfied smile spread across James' face. “Told you he was lying Padfoot!” he said before turning to Remus to explain. “Snivelly told everyone in class today that you were going to Hogsmeade together.”

“He told everyone?” Remus asked, becoming more confused by the minute.

“Well...he told Emma Edgecombe which is basically telling everyone,” said James.

Remus didn't know Severus that well yet but that certainly didn't sound like his typical behaviour. Even if he did want to go with Remus there was no way he would be so self-assured as to just assume he would say yes before he'd even asked! He decided to play along until he could ask Severus what was actually going on.

“Oh yeah...we were talking about it the other day actually,” he lied.

“What?!” spluttered James and Sirius in unison.

“Peter's lost his permission slip again, Sirius is going with that Hufflepuff girl he's been chasing for ages and you,” Remus said pointing a finger at James' chest, “are still banned by McGonagall after you made Lisa Hopkins' acne starting singing in class last month. I need *someone* to go with.”

“And the person you choose is Snivellus?!”

Remus suddenly felt angry. Why did they have to keep questioning him about it? And why did they have to keep calling him that?!

“I told you!” he snapped. “He's alri-”

His words were cut off by a wave of nausea followed by the familiar, but no less bearable, pain. But for the first time in his life Remus was almost glad when the wolf overtook him. Anything to get out of that conversation. The night passed by as it usually did. He ran through the forest and felt free – his packmates alongside him, dampening the rage and keeping him focused. Though the werewolf and the dog were more aggressive to each other than usual.

Remus slumped on top of his bed. He was too tired to think right now.

After a few hours of much needed sleep, Remus felt able to make it down to the Great Hall for dinner. The nausea had passed and now he was starving after a night of running around. The thought of piling his plate with as many carbohydrates that were on offer that night was the only thing on his mind as he dragged his aching body all the way down to the ground floor.

His friends were already there when he arrived. They smiled and greeted him but they knew better than to try and engage him in too much conversation right now. It was only after he was midway through a pile of mashed potatoes and gravy that he remembered about Severus. Remus looked over to the Slytherin table just in time to see that he was already getting up to leave. He was saying goodbye to a group of his friends but they seemed to be deep in a hushed conversation about something and weren't paying much attention. Remus tried to catch Severus' eye but it seemed almost like he was deliberately keeping his gaze anywhere other than the Gryffindor table as he walked out of the hall.

Even though he was still hungry, Remus decided to follow Severus now before he retreated to the dungeons for the rest of the evening. He didn't fancy a night of wondering what was going on. Abandoning his food, Remus muttered to Peter that he was still tired and going to head off. James and Sirius were absorbed in a conversation about quidditch and didn't notice him go. Grabbing a pie of unknown filling for later, he hurried after Severus.

Truth be told, he had been avoiding Severus since the dream he'd had the other night, but he knew he would have to face him sooner or later. The dream itself wasn't such a problem – it was the daydreams it had sparked that he really couldn't handle. Although they hadn't spoken Remus had been sneaking glances at Severus despite himself whenever they were in shared proximity. During

the last Defence class they'd had together Remus has spent an unhealthy amount of time watching Severus' mouth as he chewed on his quill while reading. But when he had begun to trace the feather over his lips thoughtfully Remus suspected he had to be doing it deliberately to torment him. Obviously not though. It wasn't like Severus could read minds.

No. Remus was quite sure nobody would be able to guess the feelings he had begun to harbour; least of all Severus himself. Not only was he most likely one hundred percent straight (umm...Lily...hello?) Remus didn't think Severus had had enough romantic experience to pick up on the signals that someone fancied him. All Remus had to do was restrain himself from this weird flirting thing he seemed to have started doing and everything would be fine.

Remus caught up with Severus beside the portrait of a witch and wizard playing chess just before the turn off to a set of steps leading down to the dungeons. He was close enough to reach out to tug on his robes but he didn't want to risk startling him. (That and the thought of touching him is enough to make heat rise up his neck.) He called his name instead. Severus looked about as awkward as Remus felt after he turned around to face him. The progress they'd made with the eye contact over the past few weeks seemed to have gone backwards. Either that or Severus was very interested in his shoes.

"Remus. How are you feeling?" Severus was all formality as he spoke. What on earth was going on with him?

"Oh...uh...fine. Well...a little tired but that's to be expected."

"I see. Good. I mean, uh, good that you aren't feeling worse than normal."

Remus couldn't help but smile. "Thanks. So...what's this I hear about you wanting to go on a date with me next week?"

Oh well done on the not flirting Remus you lasted what? Thirty seconds? Apparently the joke was ill-judged because Severus looked absolutely horrified.

"What?! No no no no no!" he said repeatedly, holding up his hands and shaking his head rapidly.

"Relax I'm just joking! Sirius said something about you saying we were going to Hogsmeade together but maybe he was...confused."

Severus groaned. "I should explain. Yesterday in-" he stopped when the two of them notice that the painted chess players were apparently enthralled in their conversation. The witch had a piece poised in mid air and was giving them a knowing smile while the wizard was literally on the edge of his seat. "Um...maybe we should continue this on the way to the library? I have some notes to give you on knarls anyway – which by the way are evil!" Severus exclaimed holding up a bandaged hand.

"See this is what happens when your knight isn't around."

Remus. Stop. Flirting. You. Idiot!

But Severus just made a small noise of agreement as they set off to the library together. They heard the witch and wizard in the portrait each give a groan of disappointment before returning to their never ending game. By the time they reached the library Severus had finished relaying his story.

"And I was the first person that came to mind? I'm honoured," Remus said once he had finished laughing. He tried to stop himself from reading too much into it. Severus didn't say anything, just

fiddled with the strap of his bag as they lingered outside the library entrance. “But, y'know, she's quite pretty. Why didn't you want to go with her?”

Severus laughed mirthlessly then. “Even if she wasn't using me in some twisted game, she isn't really my type.”

Lily. Of course. He must still be cut up about her. Remus tried to ignore the sting of jealousy that suddenly hit him as they moved into the library and sat down in those big reading chairs at the back. This seemed set to become their usual spot. Severus handed over his notes on knarls (he seemed to have made an effort to make them more legible) but Remus was too tired to go over them right now.

“So, where should we go first?” he asked instead while sinking back in his chair.

“What are you talking about?”

“In Hogsmeade next week. Where do you want to go?” he asked again yawning. He really was exhausted. So much so he didn't notice the look of shock on Severus' face at first.

“I didn't think we were actually...”

“Oh,” said Remus, sitting up more fully. “Sorry. Did you not really want to?”

“No...it's just...I didn't think...why do you want to? This isn't some trick is it?”

“Urgh, I thought we were past this by now,” said Remus, his usual endless patience always wore thin the day after the full moon.

“I'm just checking!”

“Look I like you! Is that so hard to accept?” he snapped irritably. “You're funny and you're smart and-”

Stop Remus. For the love of Merlin just stop!

Severus' eyebrows were halfway up his forehead. It was several moments before he spoke.

“Well, I have to remember not to get on your bad side this time of the month. If this is how you talk to people you *like*.”

The usual sarcastic drawl is back in place. Remus finally felt some of the tension he'd been carrying lift now that Severus seemed slightly more normal. He rubbed his palm over his face and groaned.

“Sorry, I'm not the most pleasant person to be around just now...”

But Severus was smiling. “It's just nice to know you're actually a human being with flaws like the rest of us.”

Remus doubted that Severus could understand how much it meant to be called human on days like today. He had to fight down the well of emotion in his chest. These mood swings were the worst.

“Hah, I definitely have those in abundance.”

Severus looked like he was going to say something but stopped himself before the words came. Instead he mumbled something about getting together another time to go over the work he's missed

on knarls when Remus is feeling better. He fumbled awkwardly with his belongings before getting up to leave. Remus watched him walk a few paces before abruptly stopping and turning back.

“Hey Remus, do you fancy going with me to Hogsmeade next weekend?” he said, looking only slightly flustered.

Remus grinned. “Yeah that would be nice.”

The days leading up to their trip passed by agonisingly slowly for Remus. He found the twisted knot of excitement and nervousness was getting bigger and bigger the closer they got to the weekend. Thankfully none of his friends had mentioned the fact that he was spending time with Severus Snape of his own free will since they first talked about it in the shack. (Though Sirius was making more 'gay jokes' than usual which was causing Remus to become increasingly paranoid.)

In fact he was becoming sure that the other Gryffindor students were talking about him if the hushed whispers and halted conversations whenever he entered the room were anything to go by. He supposed the news that he and the boy his group of friends had harassed for years were becoming fast friends would make for interesting gossip. Remus couldn't pretend that it wasn't getting to him a bit but he expected it would die down soon enough.

When the day of the trip finally rolled around Remus found the excitement had been almost completely eclipsed by nerves. What if they had nothing to say to each other? What if their relationship began and ended with their shared experience of mildly aggressive magical creatures? He fretted over this while spending a considerable amount of time trying to make it look like he had made very little effort on his appearance.

Severus was waiting for him behind a pillar in the courtyard when he and a few other Gryffindors arrived to hand their permission slips in to Professor McGonagall. He wasn't wearing muggle clothes like most of the other students but a set of plain black robes that Remus thought suited him quite well. Remus reminded himself not to get too interested in Severus' appearance. They were just friends – tentative ones at that – and friends did not dwell on the way other friends pushed their hair back behind their ears when it fell into their eyes or chewed on the end of their thumb when they were nervous. They hadn't even been spending any time with each other outside of class this week; as if it would have broken the spell of the strange day they were about to spend together.

“Hey,” said Severus as he approached. “Shall we get going?”

Remus looked about until he spotted Sirius several paces ahead. He was already making his way down the road to Hogsmeade, arm draped around the curly-haired Hufflepuff girl and not giving either of them so much as a backward glance.

“Yeah,” he replied, relaxing a bit.

There were several awkward silences as they shuffled along the road together. Remus desperately racked his brain for something interesting to say but the best he could come up with were

comments on the weather. He didn't think Severus would be too impressed with that. The other boy was the one to speak first, though what he said wasn't exactly welcome.

"I should have mentioned," Severus began. "I have to meet someone at The Hogs Head later on. Shouldn't be too long but if you want to head back with someone else I don't mind."

"Oh okay," said Remus, trying to sound casual and not at all disappointed. "I'm sure I can amuse myself for a little while. Who are you meeting?"

Severus hesitated. "Just Lucius. He's going to be in town today. Wants to meet a few of us for a drink."

"Oh right. Cool."

It wasn't long before they reached Hogsmeade and, once there, the atmosphere between them eased. The village looked just as picturesque as it always did. Autumn colours were everywhere; browns, oranges and reds of all shades decorated the trees that hug over the small thatched houses. Remus noticed that Severus was looking around with barely disguised wonder despite the fact that he must have come here several times over the years. He turned to Remus, grinning with excitement.

"I always love coming here. I think it would be amazing to grow up in a place with only magical people."

"I take it there aren't many wizarding folk where you're from then?" Remus asked as they made their way down the higgledy, cobbled street.

"No. Well...there must be some but I only know about my mum and Lil-" Severus stopped mid-sentence, evidently not wanting to bring up the subject of his old friend. "Anyway, the town I'm from isn't anything like this. Wouldn't it be incredible to be able to live so openly?"

"I suppose..." replied Remus.

Although he had grown up fully part of the magical world, Remus' experience of 'living openly' was limited. Severus looked so happy though he didn't want to shatter his illusion.

"So where do you want to go first?" he asked, black eyes positively sparkling.

His excitement was starting to rub off on Remus. "Um, how about Zonko's?" he suggested. Remus couldn't help but laugh at the disgusted look Severus gave him. It was another reminder of how different he was from his friends. "Okay maybe not. I can always go there on my own later. Honeydukes? My chocolate stash is running low."

"Sure, but then we're going to the apothecary – I want to see if they have any dragon teeth in stock."

"Deal. But if you start taking me cauldron shopping I'm done."

Honeydukes was crowded with students as always. They stayed just long enough for Remus to buy enough bars to keep him going until the next scheduled excursion. He sneaked a couple of the peppermint frogs that Severus had been eyeing, when he thought Remus hadn't been looking, among his purchases before they headed off to the apothecary.

Dogweed and Deathcap was, by stark contrast, practically empty. The only other patron was a harassed looking witch who was squinting at a long list while simultaneously squeezing shivelfigs

to determine their ripeness. The tall, gangly wizard who was grinding something into powder looked up from behind the counter when they entered. The beaming smile that formed on his face told Remus that he recognised Severus.

“Morning my young man! I was expecting to see you today – and you've brought a new friend with you! Does he share your enthusiasm for potion making?”

“Sadly not, Boris.”

“Oh well, it's not for everyone. I know just what you're after though, Severus, and I shan't disappoint you today! Kept them aside until you arrived so I wouldn't sell out.”

With that 'Boris' disappeared into the back of the shop that presumably was the storeroom.

“On first name terms with the owner? You really are a potions nerd,” Remus teased.

Severus just shrugged his shoulders as if to say 'guilty as charged.' The man soon returned with a crate full of dragon's teeth, delicately laid out on deep red velvet. He and Severus quickly got into a long discussion about the properties of each one depending on the breed. Remus soon got bored and started perusing the shelves absent-mindedly until they were finished (they only stopped when the busy witch huffed impatiently to be served).

“Come back soon Severus! I should have something else interesting to show you next time!” the owner called out to them as they left through the tinkling door.

“You aren't getting one?” asked Remus once they were back out on the street.

“Oh no,” replied Severus, looking slight aghast. “They're far too expensive! I just wanted to have a look at them.”

“Well Boris must like you if he kept them off sale just for you to look at.”

Severus just shrugged again. The whole 'being liked' thing didn't seem to sit well with him.

“So, do you want to get a drink or-?”

“You're welcome to share a table with us!” shouted a voice from nearby. “We could double date.”

Sirius was calling out to them from the doorway of The Three Broomsticks. He beckoned them over while the girl he was with giggled.

“On second thought let's just take a walk,” said Severus darkly before setting off in the opposite direction, hands in the pockets of his robes.

Remus hesitated. Sirius was staring at him with a raised eyebrow and indicating to the door for him to join them. After a few seconds debate he mouthed a quick 'sorry' to his now glaring friend and hurried after Severus. He couldn't tell what the other boy was thinking because his eyes were firmly on the ground.

“Sorry about him. He's a little...” Remus began before trailing off.

“Homophobic?”

Remus laughed. “Yeah. I guess you could say that.”

“Shame. I've always found him so tolerant otherwise,” Severus continued, the sarcasm positively

oozing.

Remus chuckled again. He felt a little bad about it but his friend's recent behaviour lately sort of warranted some mockery. They kept walking for a while. Conversation seemed to flow easily after that. Perhaps Severus was finally starting to fully relax around him now that he saw he wouldn't ditch him for Sirius at the first opportunity. Remus had been so absorbed that he hadn't noticed the direction they were walking in. He looked up to see they were approaching his least favourite place in Hogsmeade, if not the entire world.

"Ah, the most haunted place in Britain," said Severus. "But I'm guessing you can attest otherwise to that?"

"Huh, yeah. Funny how the shrieking only started six years ago."

Severus kept his eyes fixed on the dilapidated building. "Do you...do you think we could go in?"

"Why...would you want to do that?" asked Remus, genuinely bemused.

"It's just that I...I keep having these...dreams," said Severus, flushing with embarrassment. "And I thought that maybe if we go there together and everything is fine then..."

Remus was almost knocked over by the guilt. "Severus I am so sorry."

"No, no it's okay. I don't blame you. Not anymore. It's just...forget I said anything."

"No! Of course we can go...it's just...I'm not sure we can get in this way...but...there is something we could try. Come on!"

Remus really did not want to go in there. He had never spent any time there other than to transform – why would he have? – but of course he owed it to Severus to try. He hadn't realised how badly being exposed to his werewolf form had affected him. Plus it wasn't likely to work anyway...

So they set off up the track to the rickety, twisted shack. As they approached Remus felt sick. His stomach twisted with an overwhelming sense of dread. Severus, too, looked paler than usual. Each of them was determined though. When they got to the front door, Severus made to try the handle but Remus just shook his head. Dumbledore had bewitched the building so that no one could get in – or out – through any of the doors or windows. There was something he had never tried though – apparating.

Madam Pomfrey had always assured him that she could get to him quickly in an emergency. She cast various spells on him to monitor his physical health each month. There must have been a way to enter the building faster than the tunnel and apparating just off Hogwarts grounds would certainly be quicker than disarming the tree and crawling through the cramped space. Nobody knew what the building looked like inside (looking in the windows showed a completely different picture) so no avid ghost hunter would be successful even if they were brave enough to try.

"Hold on to me," said Remus firmly.

"What?! Why?"

"I'm going to try and apparate us inside."

"You can apparate?! But you're not even seventeen yet! We've only just started to learn!"

"Special privileges when your dad works for the ministry and is very keen for you to have the

ability to escape from dangerous situations,” said Remus dismissively. “Look I’ve been able to do short distances since I was fifteen. You can trust me. It probably won’t even work anyway.”

“Alright,” said Severus, looking very apprehensive.

He clutched on to the sleeve of Remus' jumper. Severus sighed in exasperation when Remus just looked at him as if to say 'do it properly' and tightly held on to each of his forearms. Trying to ignore how close they were, Remus kept his mind focused on the 'three D's.' He clearly pictured the crumbling interior of the building in front of them, turned them both on the spot and -

When the two boys opened their eyes they were standing in the centre of the Shrieking Shack. They looked at each other in astonishment. Between exclamations of 'that was amazing' and 'I really didn't think that would work' it took them a while to realise they were still clinging on to each other. Severus pulled away first with an embarrassed cough.

As Remus looked around the familiar room, the excitement at the feat he'd just performed quickly faded and the anxiety returned. It felt wrong being here. He knew it was just because he associated the place with the fear of transforming and what could happen during that time. It was okay, he told himself. They were in broad daylight. It wasn't even close to full moon. But his ability to rationalise didn't make much difference.

“I love what you've done with the place,” Severus said sarcastically as he took in the broken furniture and clawed carpets.

“What I've done *to* the place you mean,” Remus muttered.

He watched as Severus strolled over to the ripped and frayed sofa and found a spot without springs poking out to sit down on. It was fine. Severus would be fine. So why did Remus' chest feel so tight?

“It's not how I imagined it,” said Severus, as he continued to survey the room. “Is this where you've come since you started school?”

“Yes,” said Remus quietly.

He looked to the corner of the room near where Severus sat and suddenly saw his eleven-year-old self there – crying and rocking – those first times he changed without his parents being there he was scared. So, so scared. But then the rage would come.

It wasn't like that any more though. He had his friends. But they weren't here now!

Remus was finding it more and more difficult to breathe. It felt like the dust in the air was clinging to his lungs and suffocating him. He tried taking a deep breath but the fear only made him pant faster. Oh God, why had he come here? He had to get out!

“Remus? Are you okay?”

He could only whimper in reply. Severus! He shouldn't be here! It wasn't safe! He could get hurt! Remus' thoughts were spiralling out of control as he slipped into full blown panic. He looked around wildly but he could barely see as his vision blurred at the edges.

“Remus! Look at me!”

Severus grabbed him by the shoulder with one hand and guided Remus' panic-stricken face towards his with the other. Remus took hold of him just to have something solid to cling on to.

When he finally looked into Severus' eyes he felt a sense of calm pushing through to him. He kept staring into the soothing blackness until his breathing slowed and his heart stopped thumping in his ears. He realised Severus was breathing slowly in and out and Remus mimicked him until he felt something that resembled normal.

They were still holding on to each other. Remus gave in to the urge to pull him closer into an embrace. He just had to feel that he was there and he was safe and he hadn't hurt him. Oh thank God he hadn't hurt him.

It was difficult to say who kissed who first. All Remus knew was that suddenly they were leaning in to each other and then all he could feel was the warmth, softness and comfort of Severus' mouth against his. The hand that had been guiding his face moved round to rest on the back of his head before pushing them together so fiercely it almost hurt.

But when Remus opened his mouth to deepen the kiss, Severus jumped away as if he'd been burned. He looked around anxiously as though expecting someone to jump out and catch them. For a moment he thought Severus was going to scream at him or even punch him in the face again. Remus braced himself for both but neither came. Instead the boy just looked into his eyes a second time. He had no idea what Severus saw there but, whatever it was, it must have alleviated his doubts because suddenly he was back and kissing him even more intensely than before.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter turned out much longer than the others but there was a lot to say. Hope you liked it!

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Severus has a whirlwind of a day.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“So what do you think Sev?”

“Hmm? Sorry what?”

“Bloody Hell are you even listening?!”

Avery's suspicion was correct. Severus really hadn't been listening. Ever since he arrived at The Hog's Head all he could do was run a finger over his still tingling lips to reassure himself that, yes, that had actually just happened. At the time, he had thought he must have wandered into one of his dreams. At first there had been just Remus wrapping his arms around him and clinging on for dear life. That had been shocking enough. But then the other boy had kissed him (or had he kissed Remus? Severus had no idea) and it had been pure, exhilarating bliss.

Then, just like in his dreams, a cold wave of fear washed over him. He had actually thought the other three were going to jump out at him. It would have been quite the elaborate prank, and would have required a lot of dedication on Remus' part, but it was the only rational thing he could come up with by way of explanation. However, one look into those amber eyes told him otherwise. The strength of Remus' feelings were so strong he hadn't even had to consciously use his gift for them to push through to him. It was real. But how could it be? He had decided to push contemplation aside in favour of kissing Remus again.

That need for contemplation could wait no longer though; not even for Introduction to the Deatheaters 101 by Lucius Malfoy and Bellatrix Black. He had only been dipping in and out of the speech while his mind went over and over what had occurred just fifty minutes prior. When they had finally broken apart, the two of them had just looked at each other, too stunned to speak. Eventually Severus managed to suggest that they get out of there and, after taking a few moments to compose himself, Remus had felt ready to apparate them both back outside into the fresh air.

The silence returned as they walked down the path away from The Shrieking Shack. Severus had been certain there would be no skin left on the end of his thumb by the time they got back to the main road. He was beginning to think this was going to be something they left behind in that building and never spoke of again. But no.

“So...was...what happened in there...better or...worse...than the nightmares you've been having?” Remus asked carefully.

Severus laughed – a little too loudly and a little too nervously – before saying:

“Better. Definitely better.”

“Okay. Okay good. Is it...something you would want to happen again?”

“Err...would *you* want it to happen again?”

“I asked first.”

Severus had given him a mock glare before bracing himself with a tentative, shaky breath.

“I...would,” he said.

The word 'but' had just been about to form on his lips before Remus blurted out:

“OhthankMerlinmetoo!”

After that the last place Severus wanted to be right now was sitting in the dingy pub listening to Lucius prattle on. However, he knew if he hadn't shown up he would have had to face the wrath of the majority of Slytherin house. He tried to focus on what his old prefect was saying. Before, when he'd been around fourteen and Lucius had started to take notice of his talents, Severus was completely in awe of the older boy. The boy who had smiled with approval at him when he had questioned the taboo around blood magic in the common room one day. The one who saved him a space at the Slytherin table after he found out Severus been the one to invent *Sectumsempra*. The one who had finally seen him for his abilities rather than who his father was. (Although he always subtly reminded Severus of his place whenever he got too cocky.)

But today Lucius just seemed...arrogant...pompous even. Severus even found himself fighting the urge to roll his eyes a few times. Maybe it was the distance he had had from him – or maybe it was the short time he'd spent with Remus – either way he found that his boyhood infatuation had well and truly withered into nothing.

Even though he was extremely distracted by what had occurred earlier, Severus had got the jist of what Lucius and Bellatrix were saying. (Severus had only met Bellatrix a few times but that was enough to convince him she was positively certifiable.) He caught the familiar and intoxicating words of rebellion, resistance and revolution but...this time he was somehow more...cautious.

“So this wizard – he's powerful, yeah we get that – but what else do you lot got? Weapons?” asked Rosier doubtfully.

“Who needs weapons against a load of muggles?” Avery guffawed beside him.

“Not muggles you pratt!” he retorted. “Other wizards. The ministry! Dumbledore! I imagine they have something to say about all this.”

Bellatrix's glare sent Rosier cowering away from her. “You doubt The Dark Lord's power? I'd be happy to demonstrate on you the things he has taught me,” she said, already reaching for her long, curved wand.

“Easy now Bella,” said Lucius, placing a calming hand on her shoulder and giving Rosier a twisted smirk. “The boy asks an innocent question. Allow me to reassure you all, The Dark Lord has acquired many followers and not only wizards. He has dark creatures among his ranks. Powerful ones. Dementors, giants, even werewolves.”

Werewolves?

“Filthy half-breeds have their uses,” spat Bellatrix as she concealed her wand among black lace again.

Severus turned cold. Weren't werewolves just wizards with an affliction? That was a question he knew better than to ask the group gathered there. Much like his own experience in Slytherin house a clear hierarchy was evident under this 'Lord Voldemort.' Blood was still key – lineage and status came first, talent later. Maybe it was just the way things were meant to be...

He knew they were reaching the climax of the meeting when Lucius pulled up the sleeve of his fine robes to reveal a pure black tattoo standing out harshly against his translucent skin. Bellatrix followed suit to reveal the same mark with pride. A skull entwined by a serpent.

“If you wish to join him you must prove your worth – and your unwavering loyalty,” she said to the hushed crowd. Her eyes lingered darkly on Severus for some reason. Perhaps she sensed his hesitation.

“This mark will bind you to him,” Lucius explained. “And to each other. A means of communication and summoning.”

Monitoring more like...

“I'm in,” said Mulciber confidently, already rolling up the sleeve of his left arm.

Lucius chuckled. “No one should feel the need to make the decision today. Take some time to think about what we've said.” He covered his arm and stood up. “But remember – change is coming. You don't want to get left behind.”

With that vague threat, he and Bellatrix left. Severus heard the loud crack of apparition as soon as they had exited the pub. Most of the others stayed to discuss what they'd just heard. The ones who expressed the strongest doubts were already being rounded upon. He managed to slip out before any of his friends could drag him in to the debate. He needed time to be alone to think.

That didn't look like something he was going to get because, true to his word, Remus was waiting for him on the main street. He was sitting on a bench, swinging his legs and smiling to himself. Could it really be what happened earlier that was making him look so happy? Apparently so, if the enthusiastic wave Remus gives when he spots Severus is anything to go by. Despite his need to process what he'd heard Severus was hit with a sense of relief when he saw him. He felt muscles he didn't know he was clenching begin to relax.

“Hi!” Remus beamed as Severus approached him. “How did your meetup with Lucius go?” he asked, patting the space next to him in invitation.

“Oh...yeah it was alright,” Severus mumbled as he sat down next to him. He felt a little nervous about being so close to him but he reasoned that Remus wouldn't try kissing him again in the middle of the street. Would he?

“Seemed like there was a lot of you there,” said Remus. There was a question in there somewhere. One that Severus absolutely did not want to answer.

“Well, Lucius is very popular,” said Severus, hastening to change the subject. If Remus knew the real reason for the meeting he suspected that this thing between them – whatever it was – would be over before it had begun. “So what were you up to?”

“Oh, y'know, wandering around. You want to go anywhere else or should we head back to the castle?”

“I'm ready to go back.” He had a lot of contemplation to get through tonight.

The boys began the trek back to Hogwarts. Both of them walked a little closer together than they had on the way down. Severus found it was easier to talk when they were moving.

“Listen. I'm sorry I made you go in there,” said Severus. “It was stupid.”

“It wasn't stupid. I had no idea I was going to react that way so how could you have known? Thanks for helping me through it,” said Remus sincerely.

“No problem. I know a thing or two about anxiety myself. Though mine is more of a low-flying panic that just about gives me the motivation to get through the day.”

Remus chuckled. “Sounds healthy.”

Severus liked the way those lazy, downturned eyes would crinkle upwards whenever he made Remus laugh. Something which happened with surprising frequency. He allowed himself a proper glance at him. He was like a different person compared to the panic-stricken boy he had been just a couple of hours ago. Everything about him seemed easy and carefree now. He ran a calloused hand through his short, sandy hair and breathed in the crisp, cool air before letting out a contented sigh. Severus found he couldn't take it any longer. He had to ask.

“So are you...you know...do you like...”

“Are you trying to ask me if I'm gay?”

Severus gave him a withering look before casting *muffliato*. “I invented that spell for a reason you know!”

Remus just continued to look amused. “Have you ever known me to have a girlfriend?”

“Well...no. But then I've never paid much attention to your personal life until recently.”

“What about you?”

“Me?”

“Yes Severus, you kissed me earlier. I'm quite sure that makes it a valid question.”

“I believe it was you who kissed me.”

“We can debate that later.”

Severus reasoned there wasn't any point in hiding it now. “Let's just say my lack of good looks and charm are not the only things that have stopped me from ever having had a girlfriend either.”

Remus laughed again. Severus wasn't used to anyone other than Lily finding him this funny.

“Well, that'll just have to be another thing we disagree on,” said Remus smoothly. Severus' cheeks grew hot again.

After they got back to the castle, Severus was further surprised to find that Remus accompanied him all the way to the infrequently used staircase leading to the dungeons.

“I had fun today,” Remus said when they turned to face each other.

“...I did too,” Severus replied, putting his hands in his pockets due to not knowing quite what to do with them. “I suppose I'll see you in class next week.”

“Or we could see each other before that...if you want?”

The shy smile that had formed on Remus' face sent the butterflies in Severus' stomach into a frenzy. His lips tingled again with the ghost of their earlier kiss. He tried his very best to play it cool.

“Well, you seem to have a talent for finding me so I imagine we will.”

With that he turned to leave but Remus reached out to grab his arm.

“Almost forgot, I have something for you,” he said, reaching into the Honeydukes bag he was still carrying. “Noticed you looking at them earlier.”

Remus pulled out two peppermint frogs and handed them over to Severus. As he did he made sure their hands touched for longer than necessary. Severus had been wanting to try these for some time but he always talked himself out of spending the meagre amount of money his parents gave him on frivolous things like sweets.

Severus didn't know what to do. Instead of just saying 'thanks' like a normal person he quickly shoved one into his mouth before handing the other back to Remus, who just grins and eats his as well. It's delicious but, in his awkward haste, Severus didn't take his time savouring it and quickly swallowed. The hopping sensation in his stomach the enchanted sweet was said to produce began immediately. The two boys laughed at the strange feeling once Remus had finished his.

All of a sudden, Remus quickly looked over each of his shoulders before leaning forward to smash his lips against Severus' again. All he could taste was peppermint, so cold it almost burned when their tongues met briefly. With the satisfied look of having gotten away with doing something reckless, Remus gave him a small wave before quickly turning to leave. Bloody Gryffindors.

Severus stopped dead in the middle of making his way to the staircase. They had been standing right in front of that nosy portrait couple again. The witch was openly smirking at him while the wizard was cupping his cheeks in his hands, an expression of pure joy on his face.

“So. How did your not-date go?” the witch asked him.

“P-please don't tell anyone,” he stammered out in reply. He was going to kill Remus.

“Oh don't worry dear boy we portraits are the very definition of discretion!” said the wizard happily.

“It's certainly not the most shocking thing we've seen that's for sure,” began the witch. “Let me tell you about this other time when-”

“Don't tease the poor thing Patricia! Don't worry young man you can count on us,” said the wizard reassuringly. “Just be sure to keep us updated!”

“And don't spare the details!” the witch called out to him, cackling as he hurried down to the dungeons.

The frog was still hopping violently in his stomach when he got to the common room. The sensation combined with the terrifying thrill of all that had happened today was causing it to start churning. Unfortunately his need to be alone was interrupted again. This time by an angry looking Mulciber and a hesitant Avery. How had they got here before him? Did he really dawdle with Remus that long?

“Where the fuck did you go?!”

“Not now Mulc, I'm not feeling well.” It was no lie for once. Severus tried to move past them but they blocked his path. “Look, I just needed some time alone to consider things. I didn't realise your permission was required.”

“But you weren't alone,” said Avery quietly. “You were with that Griffindor again.”

“Moved on from mudbloods to blood traitors, have you?” sneered Mulciber.

Severus couldn't say anything. He could feel his mouth fill with saliva. Fuck, he really shouldn't have eaten that frog so fast. Mulciber stepped in closer to Severus and loomed over him. His friend always found a way to make his already sizeable frame appear even bigger when he was about to threaten someone.

“Don't take too long, half blood. Something big is coming and soon you're going to have to pick a side.”

Severus couldn't hold it any longer. He threw up at Mulciber's feet.

Chapter End Notes

I was totally blown away by all the comments you guys left on the last chapter! I made the mistake of reading them at work at now my colleagues think I'm having some kind of illicit affair because of how much I was smiling at my phone. I'm not going to correct them though cos it makes me seem mysterious. Hope you enjoy this one too!

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Remus and Severus really should have studied.

Chapter Notes

WARNINGS: emotional abuse reference, homophobic language

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Remus was glad to find they were still on knarls when he got back to class the following week. Not because he was particularly worried about missing out on studying them, but because they were a relatively easy creature and he figured he would be able to devote more time paying attention to Severus than to the actual lesson. Remus had been floating around in a giddy bubble of happiness because of him all week. He hadn't dared to hope that Severus had any interest in boys at all, let alone that he might have a reciprocated interest in him. Yes there had been an element of flirtation to their blossoming friendship but Remus had convinced himself it was all on his part. Now he knew the truth he was excited to take things to the next level.

So the usually studious boy was seeing today's lesson as more of a nuisance he had to put up with rather than an opportunity for learning. He welcomed the time he would get to spend with Severus but he just wished they could be alone. It hadn't been easy making up excuses for his absences to his friends and thus their time together had been limited.

He took his place on the grass next to Severus as usual. Neither of them seemed to know quite what to do with their hands as they stood together among their classmates. Professor Kettleburn was standing before them wearing a thick overcoat and his usual, slightly manic grin. As he ushered the class to crowd around him, Remus and Severus were forced to stand closer together. The weather had turned colder and Remus could feel the boy's steam-turned breath against his cheek.

“As you learned last week, one of the biggest challenges of breeding knarls is identifying them,” Professor Kettleburn said to the gathered students. “Because the knarl is almost physically identical to the hedgehog it is essential to keep them separated to prevent an excess of interbreeding so that the magical gene can be preserved.”

Remus noticed a strange look flash briefly across Severus' face at Kettleburn's words. His brow remained darkly furrowed as their teacher continued.

“So!” he went on, clapping a flesh and wooden hand together to create a disconcertingly dull 'thunk.' “Now that the difficult part is over all you have to do is figure out how to feed them without them going ballistic. No hints from me I'm afraid! Your preliminary reading for today's lesson should have prepared you fully.”

Remus felt his stomach drop. He hadn't really been keeping up with his studies to his usual

standard this week. Judging by the way Severus' eyes had widened in panic Remus guessed he hadn't been either. The two of them had used their assigned reading as an excuse to meet up but...not a lot of reading had been achieved. They looked at each other nervously as they both remembered what had occurred when they were supposed to be doing their homework.

Severus suggested they use one of the unused classrooms in the dungeons to study – 'for more privacy.'

“Just so we can talk!” Severus clarified, looking suddenly alarmed by what he'd said. “I'm not trying to...”

“Get under my robes?” finished Remus, enjoying the deepening shade of red Severus was going.

“Right. Exactly,” he mumbled awkwardly before leading the way.

The room wasn't much. A few abandoned desks and chairs, boxes of junk and an old duelling dummy in the back that someone had draped a (likely stolen) Gryffindor scarf round, for target practice Remus suspected. All this was surrounded by slightly damp stone walls. But it was a space for just the two of them and that was enough. Severus flicked his wand automatically to light the sconces on the wall. He seem familiar with the place.

“Sometimes I come here when I want peace and quiet,” he explained. “The walls are quite soundproof down here. Not that I'm implying anything!” he quickly added when he saw Remus' raised eyebrows.

Severus lead him over to the back of the room where he had appeared to have transfigured some of the junk into cushions. Not very well – Remus noted that they were hard and rather lumpy when he sat down – but then he remembered transfiguration was never Severus' best subject. This had been something his friends often reminded him of which he suspected was one of the reasons Severus had dropped the class this year.

They both got out their books and opened them to the assigned chapter. Severus appeared to try in earnest to read at first but his eyes kept flicking from the page back up to Remus who had started as he meant to go on – book pushed casually to the side and laid back on his elbows to devote his full attention to the fascinatingly dark boy in front of him.

“What?” Severus said after a while. “Why do you keep looking at me?”

“It's just...we don't have to study right away do we? I mean...we could chat first?”

“I see,” replied Severus, closing his book cautiously. “So what exactly do you want to 'chat' about?”

“Well there's the all important question of course.”

“What?” Severus asked warily.

“Celestina Warbeck. Yea or nay?”

“Um...nay?”

Remus sucked in his breath. “Ooh sorry to tell you this Severus but you're going to have to revoke your gayness.”

“Fuck off!” Severus looked relieved as he laughed and pushed Remus playfully.

“Sorry, I don't make the rules. She's a icon.”

“I sincerely hope you're not really a fan of hers or this thing is not going to work out.”

Remus felt a flutter of nervous excitement. There had been one more stolen, fumbled kiss when Remus had pulled him behind a tapestry on the way to Defence the other day but it had just caused Severus to storm off muttering something about 'imprudence.' So he still wasn't really sure what this was. This gave him the in he needed.

“So there is definitely a thing then?” he asked in a low voice, leaning just a bit closer.

“What are we going to do?” Severus whispered anxiously to Remus, snapping him back into the present.

“It's okay, we'll just wing it,” said Remus, trying to take a leaf out of James and Sirius' book.

Severus looked horrified. Remus knew he liked to be fully prepared for any class he came to – even his least favourite subject. He felt a little bad about being the reason for him having been so distracted.

They slowly made their way over to one of the magical enclosures each containing a male and a female knarl. Remus craned his neck trying to look round at the other pairs of students but either they were too far from each other to copy, or Kettleburn had placed some kind of concealment charm between them. He really wasn't a fan of cheating.

“This is all your fault you know,” said Severus, eyes narrowed. Though Remus suspected that, like him, he thought this momentary suffering was completely worth it.

“Yes,” Severus had said after looking as though he was debating with himself a final time. “If you want there to be.”

“Thought I, er, made that fairly obvious.”

“Hmm yes I suppose you being unable to pass me in the corridor without trying to shove your tongue down my throat was a slight indication.”

In all honesty, Severus' exaggeration perfectly summed up the way Remus had been feeling the

past few days. He had fancied other boys, sure. Even kissed one or two. (Though was always sworn to secrecy afterwards.) But he hadn't felt anything like this before. Heart hammering in his chest whenever they were close. Stammering over his words. Getting up half an hour early to primp in the mirror just in case they ran in to each other. And just wanting to touch him all the damn time!

"How long have you known?" asked Severus while Remus was busy trying to come up with a smooth line as a comeback.

"That I liked you? Probably since you drew me that picture. Or maybe before that? I'm not sure."

Severus looked away, embarrassed, but he smiled happily. "I meant, um, how long have you known you were...gay?"

"Oh. Right," said Remus. It was his turn to look embarrassed. "Um...probably since about the end of third year? It was around then I realised I was just, sort of, making up crushes on girls just to fit in with the others." - Remus had learned to avoid using any of his friends' names in front of Severus because he didn't like the look of pure hatred that flashed on his face whenever he did - "I stopped having the energy last year..."

Severus was nodding as if he understood. "So you've told them then?"

"...No," Remus replied.

"Oh...I just thought...the way Black talks about..." Severus looked as if he was going to say something more but stopped himself. "I've only told Lily," he said instead, unable to keep the hint of sadness from his voice.

"Well, for what it's worth, there aren't any rumours going round about you among the Gryffindors so I think she's kept your secret," said Remus gently.

"You mean other than the rumour your friends started about me that I'm in a relationship with the giant squid?"

"Other than that one yes. How long have you known?" asked Remus, eager to change the subject.

Severus tilted his head and thought for a moment. "I probably started considering it the day my dad called me a 'nasty little queer' when I told him I didn't want to come with him to watch football any more." He said this in a totally matter-of-fact way. As if sympathy would be the last thing he would expect from Remus. It was what he got however.

"Merlin," he said, shocked. "How old were you?"

"Hmm...about seven?" Severus' leg had begun to twitch but he hadn't seemed to notice.

"Severus...that's...does your dad ever-"

"I don't want to talk about him," Severus snapped, glaring down at the floor.

An awkward silence followed. Remus could almost see Severus retreating back into himself. He cursed inwardly for being so insensitive. Whatever was going on at home, Severus wasn't ready to talk about it with him.

"Say...it's kind of cold in here. Could we light a fire?"

Remus was pleased to see Severus looked a bit more relaxed when he looked back up at him. “Hate to break it to you Remus but there doesn't seem to be a fireplace in here. This isn't your cosy Gryffindor common room you know. Down in the dungeons it's cold.”

“We don't need a fireplace,” said Remus, summoning one of the abandoned chairs before obliterating it to splinters.

“What are you doing?!”

“Relax, there was a leg missing anyway. Doubt anyone other than you has been in here for a decade. They won't miss it.”

Severus sighed but he still got out his own wand to cast *Incendio* on the pile. Soon a small fire was burning before them. They moved closer still to sit in front of it.

“What's your dad like?” asked Severus after a while. Flames danced in his eyes as he stared into the fire.

“Mine?”

“Yeah. I want to know about him. And your mum.”

“You want to meet my parents already?” teased Remus. He waited for the familiar eye roll from Severus before continuing. “They're...they're really great. My dad works for the ministry – I think I mentioned that already – in the Control and Regulation of Magical Creatures Department.”

“That sounds a little...awkward.”

“It is,” replied Remus, thinking about the latest ongoing debate about whether werewolves were classed as 'beasts' or 'beings.' Right now they were back to 'beasts.' “But it has its perks. His inside knowledge comes in handy. He had a big attitude shift since I was bitten. I'm proud of him for that.”

Severus just nodded along, seemingly hooked on his every word as if eager to soak up all the unknown details of Remus' life. So he continued.

“My mum used to work for an insurance company. But now she mostly spends her time worrying about me.”

Severus stopped mid-nod. “An insurance company?”

“Yeah. She's a muggle,” Remus said without thinking.

Every muscle in Severus' face worked overtime to keep his face a stiff mask. “So you're half. Like me,” he eventually said.

“I guess so. We don't really put as much importance on blood in Gryffindor than you seem to in Slytherin.”

“You don't think where you come from is important?”

“I think where you're headed is more important.”

Remus expected Severus to argue but instead he just ran a finger over his bottom lip in thought, face twisted up in conflict.

“Perhaps.”

“Uh...we could cast an illusion charm so they can't see us? Make it look like the food just floated in by itself?” suggested Remus.

“I don't think so,” replied Severus. “Knarls are very intelligent and highly suspicious.”

“Some traits you both share,” quipped Remus, trying to lighten Severus' mood.

It seemed to work briefly as Severus flashed him an amused smirk but then quickly returned to gnawing on the end of his thumb. Remus wished he wouldn't, any attention he drew to his mouth was extremely distracting.

“Maybe we should just tell Kettleburn we didn't do the reading,” said Severus anxiously. “Tell him we both caught mumblemumps or something...”

“What from? Kissing?”

Severus actually growled as he turned to glare at him. Remus jumped back smiling apologetically. He looked around again trying to find something that would help them. Just then he saw Sirius wandering over to the equipment shed.

“Hang on,” he said to Severus as he made to go after his friend.

“What are you doing?!” Severus hissed after him. “You're not going to ask *him* for help are you?”

Remus just turned back, waved a hand dismissively at Severus and mouthed 'trust me' before breaking into a half jog. He heard the boy let out a frustrated huff as he went. When he got to the shed, he found Sirius round the back, leaning against it with an air of casual boredom. He didn't shift his position as Remus approached but at least he blew some of his long hair out of his eyes to look at him properly.

“Hey Pads, what are you doing round here? There some equipment we need?”

“Pfft no...we've finished already.”

“Really?”

“Yeah, I just don't really fancy hanging around to watch two knarls do the dirty. Or spending more time with my Slytherin partner than necessary the way you seem to.”

Remus chose to ignore the comment. “Could you tell me what to do? We're a bit stuck.”

Sirius pushed his hair back before pursing his lips together in an exaggerated expression of thought.

“Well, you know I'd like to mate but...if I help you that means I help Snivellus and, while I'm willing to leave him alone for *your* sake, altruism just isn't something I'm willing to stretch to.”

“Seriously?! You're that petty? How many times have I helped you out in class when you haven't studied?” Remus asked in a low, angry whisper.

"Don't tell me the prefect hasn't studied? That's not like you Moony," Sirius pointed out, assessing him from behind narrowed, grey eyes.

"I...I've had things on my mind," muttered Remus. He turned to leave before Sirius could question him further.

"*Asteraceae Excresco.*"

"What?" said Remus, spinning back round to face him.

"That's the spell you should use," replied Sirius, examining his fingernails. "What? You don't trust me now?" he asked angrily after he saw Remus hesitate.

"No no! Course I do! *Asteraceae Excresco.* Thanks!"

"Oh, and finish with *Asteraceae Corona!*" Sirius called out to Remus as he hurried off back to Severus.

"You know...I don't think they would mind," said Severus after looking deep in thought for some time. A silence had fallen between them again but this one was more comfortable, the fire provided a welcome distraction.

"Who? Mind what?"

"Your friends," Severus couldn't seem to help curling his lip into a slight sneer as he mentioned them. "I mean...they are incredibly stupid and I doubt the three of them possess the wit of a troll combined but...even I don't think they would abandon you if you told them."

Severus had hit the nail right on the head with one word. Abandonment. It terrified Remus. Although his parents were right to be protective they had made him fear it before even having a chance to experience it. *Don't tell Mrs Jones about your problem Remy or she won't want you to come round for tea and biscuits any more. No you can't go and play with the girl down the road, you KNOW why! You can tell your friends at school I'm the one that's sick and you have to visit me.* Don't say this, tell them that, it was all so much to keep track of at first. Now though, hiding things had become second nature.

"Surprise everyone! You thought I was just a werewolf but no! Gay werewolf. Two forms of deviance rolled into one!"

Remus thought he had kept his voice light but more of the fear and shame must have come through than he intended because Severus looked upset. He looked back into the fire, putting his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands.

"It shouldn't be like this," he said, voice sounding equal part sadness and frustration.

"But it is," replied Remus. If hiding was his second nature, acceptance was definitely his third.

They listened to the crackle of flames a while longer. Both lost in their own different thoughts. Eventually Remus decided that self pity was not what he wanted to spend his time doing in the

company of Severus and turned back to face him. When he did he was surprised to see a sly smirk had formed on the boy's face. Severus offered what he was thinking before Remus could ask.

“I think they would be more upset about your taste in guys actually.” He moved closer to Remus, a new found confidence springing up from somewhere. “I wonder what they would say about me?” he went on, edging ever closer, face tilted slightly towards his. “I wonder what they would say if they knew what we were about to do?”

Sneaky Slytherin, was all Remus had time to think before Severus was on him. He let out a slight 'mmph!' of surprise into his mouth as they crashed down onto the cushions with Severus on top. Admittedly they hadn't kissed much but this was the first time since the Shack that Severus had initiated anything (Remus still maintained that it had been him that made the first move) and he really hadn't been expecting it.

Severus' long dark hair tickled the side of Remus' face as he leaned down over him, arms pressed firmly to the floor either side of his head, one knee slipped in between his thighs. His confidence seemed to falter slightly once Severus realised he was fully in the driver's seat but he seemed determined to remain in control. Remus closed his eyes as Severus placed a second, more timid kiss on his lips. He continued to setting the pace and soon the kissing became warmer and wetter and more enthusiastic. Remus couldn't stop a moan from escaping as Severus' tongue gently grazed his bottom lip. This seemed all the encouragement he needed as he pushed it further into his mouth.

Remus was becoming more conscious of Severus' body on top of him. He could feel the other boy's heart thumping through his chest that was now pressed fully against his. But Remus' own nerves were dissipating as he felt himself becoming more and more overtaken with sensation. He had wrapped his arms around Severus' back and, without thinking, slid them down to his hips in order to press them in closer for more contact.

But Severus arched his back and pulled away slightly. He looked down at Remus, breathless and flushed, pale lips reddened as if they had been kissing for hours rather than minutes.

“Ah...perhaps we should stop for now,” Severus said, with the air of someone coming back to their senses.

“Sure. Okay,” whispered Remus, resisting the urge to pull him fully back on top of him.

Remus was slightly out of breath due to how fast he had ran back to his partner. Severus was standing where he left him, arms folded and a slight scowl gracing his features.

“Well?” he asked.

“It's okay...Padf-...Sirius gave me a spell to use.”

“Oh really? And what makes you think it's not some hilarious joke? At my expense no doubt.”

Honestly, Remus was worried that was going to be the case but he really wanted to trust Sirius. Things had been tense with them since Hogsmeade and he really hoped this was his form of a peace offering.

“Do you have a better idea?” asked Remus.

Severus just deepened his scowl so Remus pointed his wand at the enclosure and said clearly:

“Asteraceae Excresco.”

Immediately, hundreds of tiny daisies of all varieties began to pop up fully grown out of the ground. The knarls both shuffled over to the nearest flower and took a cautious nibble. Soon they were openly gorging themselves and seemed content.

“Huh, so they like daisies,” said Severus as he crouched down to watch the female devour her fourth. “I wouldn't have thought that would give them all the nutrients they need but I suppose if you're doing a breeding-releasing programme it's alright for a short time.”

Remus grinned triumphantly. He looked up to see that Sirius had come round from behind the shed and was standing with James and Peter, who must have also been finished, the three of them watching them. Remembering the second spell Remus pointed his wand at the ground again.

“Asteraceae Corona.”

This time several of the daisies were plucked from the ground by an invisible hand and floated upwards through the enclosure to weave themselves into an elaborate crown. The two boys stared in confusion as it continued to drift through the air before landing softly on Severus' head.

The sound of laughter from the rest of the marauders could be heard from across the grass. Severus shot Remus an angry 'told you so' look and reached up to rip the flowers off his head but stopped when Remus shouted out.

“Wait! Wait leave it – it suits you!” he said loudly. “Hang on.”

Remus muttered the spell again and this time positioned himself so that the second crown landed on his own head.

“You look positively dashing,” said Severus, sarcasm turned up full.

Remus turned to strike a pose for his friends who didn't seem to be finding things so funny any more. Severus just stared at him, bemused.

“Better to show them they aren't getting to you,” whispered Remus.

Severus simply nodded, looking adorably serious for someone with flowers in his hair. It was at that moment Kettleburn chose to appear. He heaped praise on them for 'figuring it out in the end' and oddly enough didn't even mention their crowns.

“Though I must say boys, your knarls seem far more interested in eating than in each other,” he remarked.

“Well you shouldn't rush these things, Professor,” said Remus, with a quick wink in Severus' direction.

Kettleburn let out a booming laugh. “Wise words, Mr Lupin. Wise words indeed!” he said before limping off the the next pair of students.

Somehow Remus manages to convince Severus that they should keep their crowns in place as they walked back to the castle together. It really did suit him.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry this update is later than I hoped. A combination of not really knowing where this chapter was going and being busy with stupid adult stuff. Hope you liked it! Also thanks again to everyone that has left kudos and comments!

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

This isn't something worth changing his life over, right?

Chapter Notes

WARNINGS: references to emotional abuse, references to alcoholism

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

Time whisked along faster than Severus could keep up with and things with Remus seemed to be moving just as quickly. Too quickly, he sometimes worried, but whenever they were together Severus found himself getting carried away. They were sixteen after all and Remus was his first boyfriend (could he call him that? Even in his head it sounded strange) and with him had come many other firsts. First kissing, first neck-biting, first play fighting that quickly turned into something that was definitely not fighting, first awkward groping between multiple layers of clothing, and now – right this very moment in fact – first hand holding.

They were out walking in a secluded part of the grounds which teetered on the edge of the forest. Both of them were bundled up in winter coats and scarves baring the colours of their respective houses were wrapped up to their noses. Remus had stealthily slipped his hand into Severus' after pointing out a grindylow swimming in the water as they passed the lake. The hand felt rough yet warm compared to Severus' own which were always cold. As he ran a thumb along Remus' scarred knuckles Severus reflected that, because they were out in the open, this felt like the most exciting thing they'd done so far. As it was early morning and nobody seemed to be around, they let it continue as long as they both dared.

Remus himself had certainly become more daring since the daisy-crown-incident-of-which-they-do-not-speak. Now he openly stopped Severus in the corridors to chat, making the rest of the huffing and glowering marauders stand back and wait until they were finished. Something that amused Severus greatly whenever it occurred.

But half the time they were together Severus just wanted to shake Remus by the shoulders and ask him 'why?' Why did he like him? What could someone as kind and clever and funny and sensitive as Remus Lupin see in someone like him? The thing stopping him from doing so was the fear that Remus would actually agree with him. *You're right Severus what on earth was I thinking?* So he had just decided to let this play out until Remus came to his senses.

Severus suspected this early morning walk was an apology of some kind. Halloween had been and gone and he had spent it watching Remus and the idiotic trio having fun and messing around at the feast before heading off to spend the evening together. Apparently the marauders had certain 'traditions' this time of year. Traditions that no doubt involved making somebody miserable. So Severus had retreated to the Slytherin common room, the atmosphere in which was becoming increasingly tense.

Blood status seemed to matter now more than ever and even the prestige he'd earned from being friends with Lucius wasn't enough to save him from the scrutiny of the pure blood students. One of whom had openly sneered at him the other day – something he hadn't had to endure from those of his own house in a long time. It had been all Severus could do to not unleash a torrent of hexes down upon him, if only to prove his worth.

A rift was certainly forming between him and Mulciber due to his ongoing hesitancy to commit to joining the Death Eaters. It was only to be expected. What had surprised him, though, was when Avery took him aside last night to express his own doubts to him. Severus had been rather non-committal, fearing it was some kind of set-up, but he didn't think his friend was that good an actor. And he certainly found no trace of a lie when he'd risked searching his thoughts. Who knew who had a hidden talent for Occulmency though? Merlin, he was starting to become even more paranoid than usual.

Severus stole a glance at Remus as they walked. If it weren't for him Severus was fairly certain he would have made his decision by now, and he doubted it would be the decision Remus would approve of. At the start of the school year he had felt like his path in life was set out before him. His interest in darker things had only grown after spending the most miserable summer of his life either stewing over his humiliation or listening to his father rant on about how he would 'never amount to anything' all because his mother insisted he go to 'some poncey magic school.'

"He should be learning something useful," his father had screamed at his mother one night, three quarters of a bottle of cheap whiskey down. "When I was his age I was out doing an apprenticeship. Not waving a stick around like some bloody pansy!"

Despite the torrential rain that night, Severus had stormed out of the house wondering for the thousandth time why his mother didn't pull out her own 'stick' and do something – anything!- so that neither of them had to live in that Hell any longer. Unable to call in at Lily's house for some respite he had stayed out wandering the depressing streets until nearly two in the morning. What he had seen did not endear him any further to muggles that night. His thoughts had grown darker and darker until he vowed to show his dad, Potter, Black and even Lily just how powerful he could become. The rest of the summer was taken up by researching as many curses and deadly potions he could in preparation for – well he didn't know what exactly – but something!

But now things just didn't feel the same. He tried to tell himself they were both just riding a wave of teenage hormones. That Remus would soon get bored of him. That he would ditch him as soon as his friends noticed how much time they were spending together. Even if he didn't how far were things going to go really? It wasn't worth changing his whole life over. Severus desperately wanted to talk it over with Remus but the words always stuck in his throat whenever he tried. He was convinced things would just go the same way they had with Lily.

Pulling him out of his musings and behind the cover of a large tree, Remus leaned in and captured Severus' lips in a deep kiss. Somehow all thoughts disappeared whenever he did that (and Remus took advantage of every opportunity *to* do that). Instead Severus' focus turned to the heat of the boy's mouth contrasting pleasantly with the bitterly cold air around them. Remus was also becoming more daring within their relationship as well as out of it.

Severus gasped as Remus moved from holding his hand to gripping both his wrists and pushing him back against the tree. Gasping turned to groaning when he felt Remus take his bottom lip between his teeth and tug gently. They pressed themselves closer as their mouths crashed together again. Severus was grateful he was wearing so many layers of clothing so that Remus wouldn't be able to feel how aroused he was becoming already. As usual Severus was the one to break away first.

“Okay...mmph...okay enough! Someone might see us!”

“Sorry, got carried away,” said Remus, moving back but not nearly far enough. “It's just you were so cute all bundled up and looking so contemplative!”

“There is nothing 'cute' about me,” said Severus, scowling as he pushed Remus further away from him.

“Right. Sorry. I meant you were just so irresistibly dark and brooding I couldn't keep my hands off you.”

“Better.”

The two of them sniggered as they came out of their secluded spot and wandered right into Professor McGonagall.

“Boys! Do be careful and mind where you're going! What are the two of you doing out here at this time of the morning anyway?”

“J-Just taking a walk professor!” stammered Remus, doing an excellent job of looking as guilty as possible.

Suspicion radiated off of McGonagall as she took in their flushed faces and pink lips. At least the faded love bite Remus had given him was safely hidden under Severus' scarf.

“Very well. Carry on then...oh and boys?” she called out after them as they scurried away. “It's good to see you getting along so well these days!”

Severus waited until they were well out of earshot before speaking. “Oh Merlin, you don't think she's put two and two together do you?”

“Don't be ridiculous. There's no way she could have...” said Remus, sounding as though he was trying to convince himself as much as he was Severus.

They made sure to walk a safe distance apart after that.

Severus had hoped that double potions would be welcome distraction when it arrived later that morning. Normally potioncraft was something he could absorb himself in so fully that it was almost meditative. However today just so happened to be the day that Slughorn was introducing them to amortentia. Therefore, his two-hours of guaranteed Remus-free time was spent trying to convince himself he was *not* smelling the same scent he got when he buried his face in the boy's neck, along with chopped valerian roots and the sycamore trees from the park he and Lily used to play in. He exited the class feeling drained from the ongoing battle in his head and silently thanked Salazar Slytherin for the short distance between the classroom and his common room.

It didn't look as though he was going to have a restful break between periods, however, as a gang of students from the upper years were crowded around the seating area by the glowing fireplace. He sighed inwardly as Avery and Rosier indicated the seat they had saved for him.

"I'm sure you've already guessed what this is about," said Mulciber who was standing up to address the crowd with an air of importance. "Most of you know by now that my father is an influential part of the movement."

Since when did Mulc use words like 'influential?' It sounded like he thought he was moving up in the world. Not that Severus could really talk – he had worked hard to drop his Midlands accent as soon as he'd got to Hogwarts. Anything to distance himself from his own father.

"I heard he was a bottom tier lackey," whispered Rosier loudly, making Severus smirk.

"He's asked me to keep it quiet but I think you should know how things are, err, progressin'," Mulciber continued, ignoring them. "Might help some of you make the right decision."

Severus began to pay more attention. Getting some more inside knowledge of how the Death Eaters operated would definitely be helpful. Mulciber went on to describe how The Dark Lord's followers were steadily increasing and that a successful attack had been carried out the other night in a city not far from Severus' home town.

"Seven muggles killed along with two blood traitors," he reported, with a twisted grin.

Normally Severus found the green glow of the common room comforting, but right now it only seemed to lend an eerily sinister tinge to the faces of his fellow house mates, most of whom appeared to be relishing the news. He tried to harden himself against the loss of life. There was no such thing as a peaceful revolution after all. It was something he would have to get used to should he set on this path.

"That it?" asked someone behind Severus who sounded unimpressed.

"Two children bitten as well."

"Bitten?"

"Yeah, by the werewolf Greyback. Part of the deal for him and his gang...offering their services."

"What's the other part of the deal?"

Mulciber looked slightly taken aback by Severus' question. Or perhaps simply by the fact that he had spoken at all. He had a habit of staying silent during these things.

"I-err-whatd'yamean?"

"I mean I thought this movement was about wizard liberation from muggles. What do werewolves get out of it?"

"Oh...well...The Dark Lord has said they'll be rewarded under the new order."

"Rewarded how? They won't suffer the same treatment they do now?"

"Bloody Hell Snape I don't know! Since when were you so interested in werewolf rights?"

"Just curious to see how in-the-know you really are Mulciber..."

The boy looked ready to murder him but it couldn't be helped. It wasn't like Severus could admit the real reason for his interest. His mind started running at top speed and he stopped listening to what was going on around him completely. Maybe things would be better for him *and* Remus under this 'new order?' After all, what was waiting for Remus after he graduated? A lifetime of

prejudice and hiding? Never holding down a job? Hell, maybe Remus himself had even thought about joining!

Severus told himself the thought was ridiculous as soon as it had formed. But was it though? It would explain why Remus had taken an interest in him. What was it Remus had said when he had told him he admired him for not getting bitter at the world? 'Maybe I'm just good at hiding it.'

If anyone would want things to change more than Severus did it would be Remus. That settled it. He would have to talk about it with him. Even though the thought alone was enough to set his hands trembling. Ever practical, Severus reasoned that if it did cause him to lose Remus, it was better it happened now before he got too attached.

Severus spent most of dinner pushing peas around his plate. He'd made up his mind to speak to Remus tonight and his appetite had been rendered non-existent. He also must have glanced over at the Gryffindor table one too many times because the next time he looked up magical gold writing was hovering in the air over the top of Remus' head that read: 'stop staring, creep.' Pettigrew was quick to give away Potter and Black as the culprits by his uncontrollable giggling.

The sound quickly caused Remus to notice the words above his head. He glared at his friends and said something in a voice too low for Severus to hear before pushing his plate away and leaving the table. He must be upset – Remus rarely let anything come between him and food. Severus made to follow him but hesitated when the rest of the marauders went after him too, shooting Severus a collective look that clearly said 'back off.'

Severus didn't trust those three any further than he could throw them, however, so he decided to follow at a distance far enough away to remain unseen but close enough so he could still step in if needed. He caught up with them in one of the wide corridors where a suit of armour provided the cover he needed. Potter had hold of Remus' arm to slow him down. Severus fought down the familiar urge to attack first.

“Hey! Remus! Wait!”

“What?!”

Sirius reached the two of them with Pettigrew lingering behind. “What are you getting so worked up over Snivellus for anyway?” he asked with a sneer that wouldn't look out of place on Severus' own face.

“I've told you to stop calling him that around me!” shouted Remus angrily. Shrugging off Potter he turned to face them all. He took a long, shuddering breath in an effort to regain some of his usual composure before continuing. “Look. Severus is my...he's my friend. I'm sorry if you all don't like it but you're...you're just going to have to respect it because I...I like him a lot...a-and we're going to be spending more time together from now on!”

Severus imagined he was looking as flabbergasted as the rest of the marauders were. To say he was bowled over by Remus' words was an understatement. It didn't matter that his voice had been shaking as much as the rest of him as he'd said them. The defiant way he was looking at them all now showed how much he'd meant them. Before he knew what he was doing, Severus stepped out

the face them all.

Chapter End Notes

Guys I made a [Tumblr!](#) If you have one and wanted to, like, follow me that would be totes rad.

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

In which Severus gets a little possessive.

Chapter Notes

WARNING: there is some sexual content in this chapter. It's not smutty (not that I have a problem with smut which if you've read my other Snupin you'll know!) but don't worry about skipping over it if you want. It starts in the broom cupboard (stay classy boys) and ends at the *** and you can just know everyone has a happy time until the angst comes back in full swing!

He'd done it! He'd finally told them! Well, okay, he hadn't *told them* told them but he'd finally said the words aloud. Severus was his friend as much as they were now and they needed to respect that. They already knew, of course, but now it was official. He thought it had gone well, all things considered. He had been assertive but not aggressive, measured but not timid. Maybe now they could finally start to-

Remus looked past the shocked faces of his friends to see Severus stroll out from behind a suit of armour. Had he heard all of that? The fact that he was wearing his trademark smirk confirmed that he had. Sirius was the first to follow Remus' gaze to where Severus stood.

"What the fuck are *you* doing here? Piss off!" he shouted.

"Come now Black, is that any way to talk to a friend of a friend?"

Oh no. He was absolutely loving this.

"What do you want Snape?" asked James, looking as though he was trying his hardest not to hex his face off. Which was good because Remus really liked that face.

"What do I want? I was just coming to ask my *friend* here if he wanted to hang out. Nothing unusual about that is there?"

Oh God he had to stop this right now. The rest of the marauders were definitely not ready for full on sarcastic Severus Snape just yet. Not to mention the predatory look in his eye would do little to endear him to them at the moment.

"Right. Yes, um, see you later guys," he said, trying not to look at his friends as he strode past them.

"Moony..."

The way Sirius said his nickname was a warning. Remus finally got the courage to look each of them in the eye once he was next to Severus. Sirius looked livid. James did too but there was more

concern for Remus flashing behind his eyes. Peter just seemed confused and slightly panicked.

“Sorry guys. We'll talk later tonight, yeah?”

“Oh you bet we will,” growled Sirius.

Severus gave them a mocking wave before placing a possessive hand on the back of Remus' arm as he fell in place beside him. Once they had rounded the corner, Remus wasted no time in letting Severus know how much he did not appreciate that performance.

“Merlin Sev, you really pick your moments don't you?” he snapped irritably. Severus didn't say anything but he continued to smirk as Remus went on reprimanding him. “Honestly! I had it all in hand. They're going to need time to come around. If you just waltz up to them and immediately start goading then-woah-hey!”

Remus' scoldings were interrupted by Severus yanking him into the nearest broom cupboard they passed and closing the door. It took a moment for his eyes to adjust to the darkness but when they did he could make out several of Filch's mops and buckets, more cobwebs than he was comfortable with and just a flash of Severus' pale skin as he pulled Remus in close. He quickly forgot about his surroundings once Severus' open mouth was firmly on his, smooth hands snaking up his chest before coming to cup his jaw to pull him even closer.

Severus was more impassioned than Remus had ever found him before. He had a strong suspicion he was being fought for. Remus wanted to tell Severus that it was okay, that he didn't have anything to prove, but he was starting to become light-headed as they kissed again and again and he didn't protest when Severus pushed him hard up against the cold, stone wall. He held Remus back and ghosted his mouth teasingly over his for a moment.

“So,” he breathed, continuing to deny Remus' straining mouth any full contact, “we're friends are we?”

“I-uh...”

The words Remus was about to say were cut off by a sharp intake of breath as Severus' hand came to rest on the front of his jeans.

“You see...I was under the impression we'd sort of skipped over the friendship stage,” said Severus as he began fumbling with the buttons.

He was doing a good job of keeping his voice steady but Remus could tell Severus was nervous. That the quickening pulse he could feel in his neck and ragged, shallow breathing wasn't just from being turned on. Remus wanted to ask him so many questions but the most obvious one was: *Are you really sure you want to do this? Right here, right now?* But then Severus' hand was...

Remus was downright terrified himself but he'd wanted this for a long time now...rational thoughts about time and place could go to Hell. He couldn't stop a sharp intake of breath as Severus touched him, all thought of teasing forgotten in his concentration.

Despite the darkness, he still felt Severus' eyes searching his face in communication. Questions radiated from him as well: *Is this alright? Do you really like this? Do you really like **me**?* Remus answered the unspoken words by placing his lips against Severus' again and moving in to touch him as well. He made a small noise of surprise against Remus' mouth and put his free hand against the wall to steady himself. The rest of the communication between them took the form of sighs, whispered curse words and the occasional stifled, bitten-off groan.

It was over quickly, the excitement too much for the both of them to handle. As Remus reached the edge he buried his face in Severus' flushed neck to muffle the sound of his name spilling from Remus' mouth over and over. That brought Severus crashing over as well. They continued to cling on to each other until their breathing returned to something resembling normal.

“Well, I suppose I shouldn't keep you to myself all night,” Severus whispered into his ear. With a groan of protest from Remus, he untangled himself from his arms.

“But w...wait don't you want to...talk or something?” asked Remus, just about regaining the capacity to speak in full sentences.

Severus laughed affectionately as he straightened his robes. “Plenty of time for that. You said yourself we'll be spending more of it together from now on didn't you?”

After placing a final kiss on Remus' stunned mouth, Severus swept out of the broom cupboard. In the flash of light from the open door Remus saw that he was wearing the smuggest look he had ever seen on anyone's face.

It took a while for Remus to summon the confidence to head back to the Gryffindor common after that. As soon as he stepped through the portrait hole he was convinced that everybody knew. Every whisper and ripple of laughter felt like it was at his expense. He told himself to get a grip - there was no way anybody could know about what just happened. Remus, thankfully, had possession of the map today and had been able to use it to safely ensure that nobody had been around when he exited the musty room, long after Severus was gone. It hadn't been to most conventional place for a first time, but then he hadn't exactly chosen the most conventional person to have one with.

He didn't bother looking around for the rest of the marauders – the map had already shown him that they were huddled together in the dorm room, discussing him no doubt. Remus swallowed against the dryness of his mouth as he headed straight there. The longer he put this off the more anxious he would become. They were his friends, he told himself, they had done more for him than anyone else in the world. There was no way they would-

“Have a nice, cosy time with your Death Eater friend then?” snarled Sirius as soon as he entered the dorm. He glared up at Remus from his place on the floor beside James and Peter.

“Sirius I-”

“You know that's what he is don't you?!” Sirius looked like he was on the verge of becoming hysterical. He made to stand up but James pulled him back down.

“Okay Pads calm down! Let's just talk about this.”

As Remus sat down he could see that his friend's eyes were bloodshot. Had Sirius been crying? The thought softened his anger towards him somewhat.

“I don't know why you're being like this,” Remus said, a hint of desperation in his voice. “I've been trying to tell you all for ages. We've been wrong about him!”

“Really?” retorted Sirius. “Maybe you should ask him what he was really doing when he ditched

you that day in Hogsmeade.”

Remus was about to respond but something about the way James' gaze dropped to the floor and Peter shifted uncomfortably made him hesitate. It hadn't felt right when Severus went to The Hog's Head that day. The look on his face when he'd returned betrayed the fact that whatever went on in there had unsettled him. But Remus had been so caught up in the moment they'd shared earlier that he had dismissed his concerns for simple nerves.

“W-What do you mean?” he eventually stammered, searching James' face. “He was just meeting Malfoy.”

“Remus...Malfoy was there to recruit,” said James quietly, still not meeting his gaze.

“No that's not...how would you guys know?”

“Oh I don't know,” said Sirius. “Maybe because my delightful cousin was there too? Maybe because my fucking *little brother* is one of the idiots they're trying to drag down with them?”

“I didn't...why are you only saying this now?” Remus asked, anger rising up inside him again. “Do you really hate us being friends that much you would make this crap up?” Even as he said it he knew they would never do something like that. That meant they were either mistaken or...

Sirius just let out an angry laugh and shrugged his shoulders at James and Peter in a way that said 'told you we wouldn't get through to him.'

James sighed before finally looking Remus in the eye. “Sirius only found out about it from Regulus a few days ago. Took him this long to get him to admit why he's been acting so weird...well, weirder than usual anyway. We've been trying to figure out how to tell you.”

Remus put his head in his hands. No, no this wasn't true. But Lily had warned him hadn't she? *'He's gotten into some pretty dark stuff...'*

Peter chose that moment to speak for the first time that evening. “Maybe...,” he began slowly. “Maybe Snape's gotten to him too...”

Remus' head snapped up.

“Don't be stupid Wormy!” Despite his anger towards him, Sirius was quick to come to Remus' defence.

“Think about it,” Peter continued, speaking as though Remus wasn't there. “Lots of people like him are joining up.”

Remus couldn't believe he was actually hearing this. After he was the one to take pity on Peter and befriend him all those years ago, he would turn on him just like that?! He hurtled up from the floor and out of the dorm. Angry tears stung his eyes by the time he exited the common room. Nobody followed him this time.

He wasn't sure how long he sat, curled up on the edge of the courtyard fountain, but it was long

enough for his hands and face to ache from the cold. The pain provided a welcome distraction though. Remus turned his gaze up to the moon. Waxing gibbous. In a few nights it would be full and what would he do then? Would he have to go back to suffering alone? To tearing himself to pieces? Every time he thought he was finished crying more tears would fall down his face.

What his friends were saying couldn't possibly be true. He knew Severus better than them. He should just go and find him and ask him about it. Why was he so scared to do that? Just then a startled yelp made Remus freeze in place.

“Merlin, you scared the shit out of me!”

Remus hastily wiped his eyes and stood up awkwardly. He recognised the Slytherin in front of him as Avery. One of Severus' friends with a nasty reputation that Remus wasn't entirely convinced he deserved. Though by the look of it he must have been making his way back from some detention.

“Oh it's you,” the boy said, recognition passing over his face too. “The one getting all pally with Snape lately. Wait. Were you crying?”

Remus tried to deny it but all that came out was another sob. Avery looked as though he were in way over his head. Being alone with a distraught Gryffindor late at night must have been a first for him.

“I'll, um, I'll go get him.”

“No! Wait!”

In a panic he reached out and latched on to the startled boy's left arm to stop him. An idea hit him and before he could stop himself, Remus was yanking up the sleeve of Avery's striped green jumper.

“What the fuck are you- get off me!”

But Remus had just enough time to see that what he was looking for wasn't there. All he saw was unmarked, light brown skin. The rumoured skull was nowhere to be seen.

Shock gave way to a dawning comprehension as Avery tugged his jumper back down. “You know,” he whispered. Those two words immediately shattered the momentary relief Remus felt.

“Has Severus joined?” he asked, desperately hoping that someone he'd barely said two words to throughout their whole time at Hogwarts would somehow trust him with such important information.

“Why don't you ask him? You two seem awfully close...” Avery jeered instead.

“Because I'm asking you!”

Remus' wand was at Avery's throat. He couldn't stay and fight with his friends. He couldn't find Severus and confront him. But this boy. This unknown Slytherin whose first name Remus couldn't even remember. He could take it all out on him. Sparks flew from the tip and singed Avery's collar as Remus felt himself losing control.

“Okay, okay cool it! No he hasn't!” It was only after Remus had lowered his wand that the boy added: “It's only a matter of time though. Lucius needs an answer soon.”

Chapter 13

Chapter Summary

Severus and Remus finally have that important conversation.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Severus and the snake stared at each other. Well, he didn't know exactly which head to stare at, considering there were three of them, so dividing his attention between each of them seemed like the smart thing to do. The thing was called a Runespoor. It was bright orange and hideously ugly and Severus couldn't remember the last time he'd related to something that wasn't human so strongly. It was frozen in place, unsure whether to attack or retreat. The magical barrier it was under rendering it unable to do either of course.

“As you can see, the Runespoor has three heads. From left to right they are known as the planner, the dreamer and the critic. Witches and wizards who possess the parselmouth ability have been able to provide invaluable insight into the traits of this fascinating creature. Runespoors have been a popular companion among them for obvious reasons.”

As he stood listening to the lecture, Severus was grateful that Kettleburn didn't refer to them as 'dark wizards.' He always thought it was an unfair assumption. Severus risked taking his eyes off the creature long enough to spare a sideways glance at Remus. He looked the worst Severus ever seen him. Dark circles hung below his eyes and his hand wringing was near constant. It was getting very close to the full moon but was that really all it was, like he insisted? Remus had barely spoken to him since the broom cupboard and Severus couldn't help but think...well he was thinking a lot of things.

First he had convinced himself he'd been too pushy, that Remus regretted everything. Then Severus thought he must have just been completely terrible at it, inexperienced as he was, and Remus didn't know how to tell him. Finally he had decided that Potter or Black must have gotten to him. Filled Remus' head with horrible things about him as soon as he'd returned to them for the night.

“So the planner, as the name suggests, makes the decisions. What its going to eat, who its going to bite, which direction its going in et cetera. The dreamer, however, that's the one that does the thinking – often very much to its own detriment. It can spend hours in one spot, going over everything in minute detail, getting lost in daydreams, overcome by 'what ifs.'”

Of course, Severus wouldn't know what was really going on unless he asked him. The thing was...communication had never been his strong point. Plus he had a lot of other things on his mind at the moment. Word among the Slytherins was that Lucius would be making another appearance soon. He would want a decision. Avery looked just as stressed as he was. He was really shaken after coming back from detention the other night and kept glancing over at Severus guiltily. Whatever he was plotting, Severus hadn't figured it out yet.

“The final head – the critic – is there to analyse and judge everything the other two do, often rather unfavourably.”

Severus wished he had just talked to Remus about it like he'd planned the other night instead of...doing what he did. He was such an idiot! He'd probably ruined things between them for good now...

“Unfortunately the Runespoor tends to have a relatively short life as, more often than not, the left and middle heads work together to bite off the right when they become unable to tolerate the constant criticism. Usually once the right bleeds out the entire creature dies. A good lesson in not being too hard on yourself if ever there was one!”

Privately he thought it was a good lesson in not ignoring your inner critic, but then Severus wasn't surprised that his and Kettleburn's interpretations differed. As they took their place on the stump of a fallen tree and produced their drawing materials, Remus spoke his first full sentence to him that day.

“We need to talk after class,” he said, pressing his pencil to the paper a little too firmly.

A cold sense of dread came over him and came to rest in the pit of his stomach. So Remus was breaking up with him. *Nicely done Severus, it's not even Christmas yet. At least you can cross what to get him off your list of worries*, he thought dryly.

After class they walk. Silent. Remus leads but somehow Severus knows where they're going. The dungeons. The empty classroom. The room that was once just for him. Now it was theirs. But for how much longer?

Once they entered, Severus half expected Remus to make his way over to the poorly transfigured cushions, start lighting a fire, maybe even threaten to put some Celestina Warbeck into the old gramophone they had found hidden under a sheet one day. But he just stood there, rooted to the spot like that Runespoor, his face tense with apprehension. Severus still sometimes couldn't believe he actually got to touch that face, that it willingly brushed against his. God, he should have kissed him more while he had the chance.

“I...fuck this is hard...I don't know how to...”

He waited for Remus to say the words. For him to make whatever excuse he needed so they could move on. Things would probably be simpler for both of them once he did. Still, Severus couldn't stand to look at him so he turned his gaze to the floor. It was a familiar view, comforting in a way. But lately, since being with Remus, he's been looking up. Seeing the world from a different angle. It had been a long time since he appreciated how far out the black lake stretched, how the turrets of the castle sometimes looked like they could touch the clouds.

“Are you...areyoujoiningtheDeathEaters?”

Okay. Not what he was expecting. Though, instead of heaving a sigh of relief, tension shot through

Severus' body making him rigid. His head flew back up so that he could see everything now. See the pleading desperation in Remus' amber eyes. Thoughts pushed through to him – nothing fully formed – more like a chant. *No no no not that anything but that no please*. He had to squeeze his own eyes shut tight to block it out.

“W-What?”

“I said are you joining the-”

“Yes I heard what you said I just...who told you that? One of your little friends was it? Or Lily? She seemed pretty convinced that's where I was headed...”

“Does it matter?” Remus asked, voice rising slightly. “Are you?”

“I...I don't know.”

Remus took a step back from him. His fear looked like it was very quickly going to slip into full blown anger.

“You don't know? Merlin, Sev how could you even be considering it?! You know what they are? What they do to people?!”

Severus felt his own frustration rising. Did everything really have to be so black and white all the time? He folded his arms defensively.

“Yes Remus, I'm not naïve. It's one of the reasons I haven't made up my mind yet. Are you sure *you* know what they're really like? They aren't as bad as everyone makes out. Just...just listen to me!”

To Severus' surprise, Remus did listen. He listened as Severus repeated the same old arguments he'd heard time and time again since he was twelve. The centuries of prejudice against them, how they didn't deserve to hide, how muggles would be better off anyway. But it all felt so...so hollow now. As Remus looked more and more disgusted by the things he was saying, Severus trailed off.

“So that's it? You think those things justify killing people? Torturing them?”

“No of course I- Things have to change!”

“Not like that! There are better ways!” said Remus, he was almost shouting now.

“Things can't always be pretty and nice! The world isn't like the happy bubble you've grown up in!” retorted Severus.

The dark look that had come over Remus' face made Severus instantly regret what he had just said. “Happy bubble?” he asked, his voice low and dangerous now.

“No-wait-I didn't mean...I mean of course I know you've suffered! How people with your condition are treated - that's another thing that needs to change. And it would! Under the new order people would see that you're...you wouldn't be discriminated against!”

“Severus,” said Remus slowly. “You know the one who's leading the werewolves that are turning to the Death Eaters don't you?” Severus didn't need legilimency to sense it was too dangerous to answer but Remus continued regardless. “Greyback. The one who turned me.”

Severus found his voice then but it was barely a whisper. “...what?”

“Greyback. The one who crept through my window and tore my fucking throat open when I was four years old. THE ONE WHO TURNED ME INTO A FUCKING MONSTER! THAT'S WHO YOU WANT TO JOIN?!”

Remus was beside himself. All thought to discretion gone as he screamed at Severus. His face was turning an angry shade of red, making all the scars on his neck even more obvious. Severus wanted to collapse onto the floor and never get up again.

“Remus I didn't- Remus I'm sorry! I didn't know! Of course I wouldn't have-” He had to stop. His voice was cracking.

“Look me in the eye. Look me in the fucking eye and tell me things would be better for me if the Death Eaters had their way. That they really have *my best interests at heart*.”

But Severus didn't look him in the eye. Deep down he knew he had been deluding himself. Anyone could see this Dark Lord was just using the werewolves. That he would cast them aside like animals once they had served their purpose. Instead he buried his face in his hands.

“I can't...you're right...I'm sorry.”

He flinched when Remus touched his arm gently. He was still too afraid to look at him.

“Shit...I shouldn't have got so angry. It's just...those people are evil Severus!”

Severus shrugged off his arm, still not quite ready to admit defeat. Remus sounded just like Lily.

“Everyone is so quick to call them evil! And yes, maybe some of them are – but I have friends in there. Friends who are going to join. People who've supported me and stood up for me more than *you* have over the years!”

“I've already told you I'm-”

But Remus stopped mid-sentence. He must have realised he had never actually said the words. As he looked at Severus, his voice became careful and measured. Like what he was about to say was the most important thing and he had to get it right.

“You're right. I should have stood up for you before now. I wasn't there for you. I...I never bothered to get to know you. I was scared – I still am – I don't know why I was put in Gryffindor because I'm a fucking coward! Severus I am so so sorry. You won't ever know how much.” He turned Severus' head towards him, forcing him not to look away. “But I'm here now. And I'm not going anywhere.”

Severus never really understood why they called him Snivellus. He didn't cry often. He learned from a young age that it wouldn't get him anywhere. He didn't cry when he fell from his broom in first year and they all laughed at him, didn't cry whenever his dad told him what a disappointment he was, didn't even cry the night Black almost killed him. But the tears fell now. He tried to hide it. Reverted to all his old tricks – eyes to the floor, hair over his face – but Remus just closed the distance between them and took him in his arms.

As soon as Severus' head hit his chest, the floodgates opened to let forth racked, heaving sobs. The insurmountable stress he was under, the anxiety from hiding it from Remus, the fear of rejection from both him and his peers – it all came pouring out of him. But most of all he was crying from relief. Remus knew it all now. The darkest part of him. And he was still here.

Chapter End Notes

Not gonna lie guys, I got a bit emotional writing this chapter! We are reaching the end now I think. Probably about three more to go.

Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

It's Christmas time at Hogwarts.

Chapter Notes

WARNING: reference to domestic violence and alcoholism

See the end of the chapter for more [notes](#)

The Christmas holidays were fast approaching and Remus was nervous. He had something to ask Severus. It certainly wasn't as big or as terrifying as the last thing he had to ask him, but still, it was important to Remus and he was feeling vulnerable.

It was officially cold. The ground was frozen hard bellow them where they sat underneath a beech tree. *That* beech tree. The tree where, only six months ago, Remus had also been sitting, glaring down at his book, pretending to be an innocent bystander while his friends humiliated Severus. It felt like they had both grown up in a lot of ways since then.

Remus was getting less and less worried about what other people thought of him by the day. When he was with Severus, everyone else seemed to melt away. He no longer cared about the looks they got when they were huddled together, giggling uncontrollably at an in-joke so personal no-one else would have got it even if they did bother to explain. He didn't care if they touched in public just a bit too often for friends to touch. They denied it when anyone asked, rolled their eyes at the jokes, but they didn't stop. Severus didn't seem overly fussed either. Just before they met up today Remus had caught him having an open conversation about their relationship. Granted the conversation was with a portrait, but still.

“Do you really think he'll like it?” Severus had asked a vaguely familiar chess-playing couple.

“My boy, he's going to absolutely adore anything if it comes from you!” squeaked the wizard in the painting.

“Yes, yes it's all very cute,” drawled the witch, knocking away one of the wizard's pawns while he was distracted. “You still haven't told us all the details though...just how far have you two...”

“Um...well...you see that's...uh...” mumbled Severus, turning bright red.

“Patricia stop it! They are half your age!” cried the wizard.

“They are also made of flesh and blood while I'm oils and turps! I need to get my kicks somehow Felix.” The wizard sighed and looked at Severus apologetically before noticing Remus hanging back in the shadows. “Oh and there's the fine young gentleman himself! Do come over, don't be shy!”

“Ooh! Please say you're going to treat us to a display like last time...”

“On second thought boys just go before this letch gets overexcited.”

Remus had raised an eyebrow at Severus when he approached. “Last time?”

“Yeah, those are the two you snogged me in front of after Hogsmeade. I've had to keep them sweet ever since...” replied Severus with mock irritation. It certainly seemed to Remus like he had been enjoying the conversation. He wished he had someone to be open with too. He didn't think any of the portraits in the Gryffindor tower would be as discreet if he chose to confide in them though.

They had walked aimlessly, Remus listening as Severus chatted about some new properties of gillyweed's use in potion making that had just been discovered. When they reached the tree, somehow it had only felt right to sit under it.

“So,” Remus began by asking the question he asked most days. “How are things in Slytherin? Are people still...you know...are they treating you okay?”

Severus rolled his eyes but Remus could tell he appreciated this constant enquiry into his welfare. “Yes Remus I'm fine. Same as yesterday, same as the day before.”

“Well I'm going to keep checking just so you know.”

“I know but there's really no need. Things are actually...better. I would have done it ages ago if I'd known!”

Severus went on to recount the story he seemed to have become very fond of telling. One evening, not long after they had had their talk, Mulciber had accosted him in the middle of the common room. He accused Severus outright of stalling, of being a blood traitor, even questioned whether his mother was really a witch at all. Severus described how he'd calmly stood before the much larger boy and told him – and everyone else listening – that he wouldn't be joining the Death Eaters. Told him that anyone with half a braincell should be able to see that this 'Dark Lord' was a manipulator with his own agenda, and was probably a narcissistic psychopath to boot. He finished by saying that although his mother was indeed a witch and his dad was a muggle, neither of those things defined him, and he was happy to demonstrate just how skilled a half-blood could be.

Remus grinned – his favourite part was coming up.

At Severus' words, Mulciber grabbed him by the front of his robes and almost lifted him off his feet. He assured Remus that his wand had been ready, that he had been just about to let loose a really impressive curse, but, much to Severus' annoyance at being upstaged, Avery had stepped in.

“Leave him alone Mulc!” the boy who Remus hadn't thought twice about cursing a few weeks ago had shouted, wand pointed at Mulciber's chest. “He's our friend!”

“I ain't friends with filthy traitors like *him*!” Mulciber had bellowed back, letting go of Severus and advancing on Avery.

“Well if he's a traitor then so am I! I'm not joining either.”

Severus had been sure Mulciber was going to burst a blood vessel then.

“Fuckin' cowards the pair of you!”

A full blown fight would probably have broken out had the three of them not been caught off guard

by a haughty voice calling from across the common room.

“It seems smart rather than cowardly if you ask me. Joining that lot just seems like an idiotic way to get yourself killed.”

The voice had belonged to Emma Edgecombe. The gang of Slytherin girls gathered round her were nodding in agreement and sneering at Mulciber.

“Then again, you never were the brightest were you?” One of them called out to Mulciber, whose response was drowned out by a nasty ring of laughter.

More and more students came out of the woodwork to express their doubts after that.

“If this 'Dark Lord' is so powerful, why does he need an army of henchmen to do his dirty work anyway?”

“My brother's a squib! What would happen to him? Not his fault...”

“They're killing too many pure bloods! There's not enough of us to start with.”

“If you ask me, the real problem is the capitalist society we all live under!”

“I'm not following anyone that posh twat Lucius likes.”

And so it continued. Severus' refusal to join had created a ripple effect among the rest of the Slytherins. Not all changed their minds by any means, but there was a significant enough number of them to know they weren't alone, that they could protect each other from those who were unrelenting in their devotion.

Remus smiled with pride at Severus who looked quite pleased with himself also. He was stretched out casually against the tree, arms behind his head as he looked up at Remus. It was only just starting to hit him how strong a person his boyfriend was.

“You know, I would probably have that repulsive thing burned into my flesh by now if it wasn't for you,” he said.

“Nah, I just gave you the push you needed,” replied Remus. Severus just snorted derisively. “I mean it!” he went on, a little more insistent. “What you did was really brave!”

“Ah yes, what a brave little Slytherin I am.”

“Stop being so sarcastic! I'm trying to have a sincere moment here!”

Severus laughed openly at that. “You're so funny when you're indignant,” he said affectionately.

Remus pouted. It was taking all his self-control not to lean over and kiss Severus right now. It was a good job he had self-control in spades because, as he looked up, he saw Lily and her friends side-eyeing them suspiciously as they walked around the frozen lake, wrapped up in scarves and earmuffs. Severus pretended not to notice them.

“You should tell her you know,” said Remus.

“No point,” replied Severus bitterly. “She's already made up her mind about me. Not that I can really blame her.”

“Maybe I could talk to her?”

“Yeah right, you can't even convince your own friends I'm not about to drag you down some evil, pureblood supremacy path!”

It was true. Remus' friends were still convinced Severus was a Death Eater. The way they talked about him you would think he was Voldemort's right hand man already! Every time Remus tried to convince them otherwise it just ended up in an argument. It was going to take them a lot to work through this, and it left Remus feeling extremely frustrated at times, but – for all James and Sirius' faults – they were extremely loyal. They still insisted on being with him every full moon, and as tense and uncomfortable it had been, Remus was grateful for it. It was finally starting to sink in that they weren't just going to abandon him the first time they disagreed over something. Peter on the other hand, Remus hadn't quite found it in himself to forgive *him* just yet.

Remus sighed. “I'm going to let things cool off over Christmas. I think some space will do us good. Then I'll try again.”

“You're not going to tell them about us are you?” asked Severus, sitting up suddenly and looking alarmed.

“No that's not what I mea-”

“Because I can't yet Remus. I'm not ready. It's not you it's just-”

“I know it's okay. I'm...I'm not ready either.” But, honestly, Remus wasn't sure how much longer they could keep things private. Particularly if they carried on they way they were. After a pause, he decided to change the subject. “So. I, um, I have something to ask you...” he began nervously.

“Oh Merlin, what is it this time?”

“Nothing bad! I hope. It's just, I know you don't like to talk about things at home but I know it's...not great...and I thought...maybe you'd like to come to mine for Christmas?”

Remus had written to his parents already. They were surprised, but happy that Remus had made such a close *friend* that he wanted to have him over for the holidays. And, although Remus' intentions were noble, he couldn't help but get excited at the prospect of sharing a room with Severus and all the privacy they could have. If he said yes of course, which judging by the way he had gone quiet, was not looking likely.

“I don't think that's a good idea,” he said finally.

Oh no. He'd offended him. Or creeped him out by coming on too strong.

“You're right,” Remus said hurriedly. “It's too soon. Sorry. Forget I said that.”

“It's not that I don't want to. It sounds amazing! Just...” Severus ran both hands through his hair in agitation and sighed before continuing. “Christmas isn't a great time at my house. My dad...drinks. And Christmas is an excuse to drink *a lot*. There's a fine window between him passing out and him getting...nasty. If I'm not there he'll be pissed off and it'll just be mum and I don't know if...I need to be there to make sure she's okay.”

Remus was stunned. He felt like an idiot. Of course Severus would want to go home for his mum. He hadn't thought things were so bad he would actually fear for her safety though.

“Sorry...I should have thought.”

“Why should you have thought? Like you say, I'm not really fond of talking about it.”

“Is there anything I can do?”

“Hmmm...” Severus mused, pretending to consider things. “You could help me murder him and make it look like the Death Eaters did it?”

Remus laughed. He was getting used to Severus' dark sense of humour. He was also getting to know that, when it emerged, the topic of conversation was closed. They sat in comfortable silence for a time. When Severus' teeth began to chatter, Remus muttered a subtle warming incantation until they stopped.

As Christmas got closer, Remus had the distinct impression that the very castle itself knew about their relationship. Everywhere they went together mistletoe seemed to magically unfurl over their heads, enchanted decorations would turn gold and green and intertwine whenever they were near, and even the Hogwarts ghosts would sing 'Baby it's Cold Outside' as their 'carol' of choice as they floated past them. They both found the whole thing vaguely torturous. So much so, in fact, that they were almost glad when the holidays finally arrived despite that it meant they wouldn't see each other until January.

Remus and the rest of the Marauders seemed to have settled into an unspoken truce for Christmas. On the train ride home he tried to spilt his time equally between messing around with them and popping in to see Severus, who was reading alone in an empty carriage. Eventually, Severus must have grown so tired of seeing Remus stressed by trying to keep everyone happy that he firmly told him to stay with his friends for the remainder of the journey. *They are evidently more starved for your affection than I am*, he had said.

When the Hogwarts Express finally rolled in to London, Remus said a cheerful goodbye to his friends that was only half put-on. (Well, except for Peter's; any friendliness towards him right now was entirely faked.) He then found his mother and father who were who were anxiously waiting for him at the side of the platform as usual. After a quick hug for each of them, Remus told them he just needed to hang back a minute to say goodbye to another friend – yes the new one, yes it's a shame he couldn't come over but he appreciated the offer, no mum you cannot say hello to him!

Severus was easy to spot in the crowd as he awkwardly manoeuvred his trunk while still carrying the book he had been reading under his arm, as if unwilling to part with it until he was finished. He was making his way over towards a woman that could only have been his mother. She was pale, skinny, and was wearing a scowl that must have been genetic.

They didn't hug. Didn't touch at all in fact. But Remus didn't miss the way the woman's face softened when her son approached. And, although Severus didn't seem to be saying much, he too seemed more relaxed in her presence. Remus didn't want to interrupt their reunion but he really wanted to say a final goodbye to Severus. Two weeks seemed like a really long time somehow. Eventually Severus' mother noticed him hovering and beckoned him over with a long, bony finger. As Remus made his way over to them, he could hear the woman talking to her slightly panic-stricken son.

“Is that the boy you mentioned in your letters?”

“Y-yes mum.”

She gave Remus an assessing look as he stood before her. Her expression was cold and betrayed nothing of what she could be thinking. Remus debated with himself on the best way to make a good impression. Should he introduce himself? Ask Severus to do it? Or only speak when spoken to? He spent so long overthinking that he had no choice but to go with option three when, eventually, the woman's mouth twisted into something resembling a smile before she spoke.

“You must be Remus,” she said, extending her hand to him.

“Yes! That's me!” squeaked Remus, taking it a little too eagerly and shaking.

“I'm Severus' mother,” she continued, inclining her head sharply towards Remus' mortified-looking boyfriend. “He has told me a lot about you and how you've been keeping him out of trouble.”

“Um...” Remus wasn't really sure if she knew just how much truth was in that statement.

“Well I'll let you two say goodbye,” she said before stepping back.

Severus gave him an exaggerated glare. “Urgh...did you really have to come over? Now it'll be non-stop questions all the way back to Cokeworth,” he said once they were left alone.

“Sounds like you've already told her all about me,” teased Remus. “Anyway I had to say bye. I'm going to miss you!”

“You're a sap. It's only two weeks.”

“You won't miss me?”

“Fine. Fine. Every moment we're apart is an agony in the deepest part of my soul. Happy?”

“Yes.”

Severus rolled his eyes at Remus before turning back to his trunk to pick up a rectangular package hanging off it and handing it to him. They had already exchanged small gifts at school. (Severus didn't know it but Remus was saving most of his money for his birthday which was only a few days after their return to Hogwarts.) So Remus was surprised, and slightly embarrassed, to get another one now.

“Let me guess – a book?” asked Remus after expressing his thanks.

“Sort of...I...hope you don't hate it.”

“You know I'll love it.”

At his words, Severus surprises Remus by pulling him in to a tight hug. Remus breathed in the scent of him and tried to hold on to the feel of his arms and the tickle of his hair against his cheek long after Severus had hurried back to his mother. Remus caught the start of their conversation as they made their way off the platform.

“You didn't tell me he was so handsome.”

“Mum!”

On Christmas morning, the poorly wrapped brown parcel is the first thing Remus opens. It is indeed a book. A sketchbook. Severus has filled it with all kinds of magical creatures. From slimy Streelers to fanged Fairies. Snarling Knarls to a pair of soaring Occamys. And on the last page – a Runespoor. Confidence and contentment somehow radiating from all three heads.

Chapter End Notes

A super fluffy chapter! Fun fact: the Emma Edgecombe in this fic is supposed to be the future mother of Marietta Edgecombe - Cho Chang's friend who ratted out the DA to Umbridge. I meant to mention this before now!

Chapter 15

Chapter Summary

Sirius is confused.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

So far, Sirius Black's sixth school year had not gone as expected. As he sat in the Gryffindor common room, next to two out of his three best friends, he wondered whether this new term would be as unpredictable as the last. He thought he had everything figured out – he, James, Remus and Peter had always been inseparable. They knew everything about each other. They had grown up together after all. And they had grown a lot from the small boys they had been when they'd first met.

The day Sirius was sorted into Gryffindor was the proudest of his life. Even at eleven years old it was somehow all the confirmation he needed. He wasn't like his mother, his uncles, aunts, cousins – even Regulus. He was different. And there was another, better way to live. One that didn't revolve around hating people because of their last names, a love of the Dark Arts and an obsession with blood status so strong that inbreeding was considered a perfect solution.

All his friends had taught him acceptance – but Remus especially. He was definitely not the sort of person his mother would want him being friends with. He was from a less wealthy family, his blood was 'tainted' by a muggle mother and he was the kindest person Sirius had ever met. Remus would always have reassuring words to say to him whenever he felt ashamed or conflicted about where he came from. Sirius thought he had been able to prove himself and put some distance between him and the values his family held during his time at Hogwarts. But when the first whispers of the Death Eaters began to surface so too did the whispers about him and what his own loyalties would be – considering where he came from. Although Remus never sought out confrontation like James, he would always stick up for Sirius whenever he heard that kind of talk. The day they found out he was a werewolf was just further proof that all the stuff his family preached about 'half-breeds' and beings was utter nonsense.

He thought that the friendship the four of them shared could survive anything. But, since the start of the school year, a wedge was being driven between them. A wedge in the shape of Severus Snape.

Sirius had thought he had Snape all figured out too. He was a nasty, slimy little Slytherin with no real friends (Lily had just felt sorry for him, that much was obvious) and an obsession with dark magic who deserved everything he got. On a deeper level, Sirius saw Snape as an embodiment of all the prejudice, hatred and arrogance he had grown up with. A symbol of everything he'd worked so hard to distance himself from. Of everything Slytherin.

Of course Remus had felt sorry for Snivellus. Of course he would be nice to him when he got stuck being his partner in class. Of course he would spend time with him out of pity. That's just how Remus was. But over the weeks and months things had started to become...weird.

Remus would make more and more excuses for why he and Snape had to meet up. He knew

Remus liked to study but he would be a fully qualified magizoologist by now if he was really studying magical creatures all that time. Once, when Sirius had taken one of his rare trips to the library, he heard Remus laughing – a full-on roar of a laugh that got him told off by Madam Pince – and who was the cause but none other than Snivelly himself.

Then there was the time Sirius had been rummaging around in Remus' bag looking for some notes he wanted to borrow. As he turned it upside-down to empty the contents on the floor, a scrap of paper fell out and landed face up at his feet. On it was a moving drawing of an Occamy. Remus couldn't have done it – he barely knew the right end of a pencil – then Sirius recognised Snivellus' scrawly handwriting.

“Pads I've told you before! Don't be so careless with my stu-”

Remus stopped in alarm when he saw what Sirius was holding. He leapt forward and snatched it out of Sirius' hands before he had time to read the words.

“Hey! I was looking at that! What is it? Did you nick it from Snivellus?”

“Don't call him that,” Remus said automatically before jumping back on the defensive. “No I didn't 'nick it' from him. It's nothing. Just notes for class.”

“What were those little figures?”

“I said it's nothing! Don't be so nosy!”

“Is it a love letter? Did Snivelly finally confess his feelings for you?” Sirius joked.

Remus just stormed off after that.

Then there was the Hogsmeade trip that Remus insisted going on with Snivellus out of some weird sense of guilt. Although Remus was unaware, Sirius had been trying to set him up with Augusta, a Hufflepuff girl from the year above them. Remus hadn't had a girlfriend in, well ever, and Augusta was sweet and kind and, most importantly, had very progressive attitudes. But when he'd tried to get Remus to come join them in The Three Broomsticks that day he'd just blown them both off. And then Remus goes and tells them all that he and Snivellus are now best friends forever and were going to be hanging out more? It was all just weird.

But the weirdest thing to happen to Sirius was that his Christmas at home had actually been...good? However it was tainted by the fact that, apparently, this was also all Snivellus' doing.

Sirius' little brother Regulus was, at best, an oddball who preferred his own company and, at worst, an outright weirdo who preferred hanging out with their creepy house elf than most humans. But Sirius loved him. They had looked out for each other growing up and Regulus had lied to get Sirius out of trouble with mother dearest more times than he could count. They had drifted apart a bit once they were both in Hogwarts but Sirius would check in on him from time to time.

When he finally made Regulus admit he was thinking about joining the Death Eaters Sirius' first emotional response had been guilt. He hadn't done enough to protect his brother from the rest of his family. He hadn't *been* enough. Then he was angry. How could he be so stupid?! Sirius tried everything to turn him away from that path – reasoning, pleading, threatening – but Regulus just withdrew into himself more and more. Eventually things just felt...inevitable.

At least they had until Christmas day. Between courses at the usually tense family dinner the conversation turned, as it often did, to blood politics. Sirius excused himself as soon as he felt the first prickles of outrage at the back of his neck. He had been so quick to leave he had nearly

knocked over Kreacher, who was staggering under the weight of an enormous, flaming Christmas pudding. He was so absorbed in thinking what a great gift it would have been if the nasty little thing had caught fire, when he almost slammed his bedroom door in Regulus' face.

“I've decided not to join,” he said out of nowhere.

Sirius had stared into his brother's piercing blue eyes that always contrasted so harshly with his serious face. Regulus didn't like being touched. He didn't like any physical expressions of affection really, but right then it was just too bad. Sirius pulled him into a tight hug, vision blurring with the sudden onset of tears. At first, Regulus' arms hung at his sides but then, eventually, they rose up to awkwardly pat his older brother on the back.

That was the start of them rediscovering how much they enjoyed each others' company. They spent the rest of the holiday camped out in Sirius' bedroom talking. Naturally, he was interested in what had swayed Regulus in his decision not to make the biggest mistake of his life. His brother told him that he was starting to feel like he had no choice but to join until an older boy showed him that wasn't true.

“It was really impressive,” said Regulus. “He just stood in front of everyone and said what half of us turned out to be thinking but were too scared to say.”

“Like what?”

“Like how Voldemort is just manipulating us because he's power hungry, how blood status doesn't define you, that sort of thing. He's half-blood himself and more talented than most people in the school. He even creates his own spells!” he exclaimed, sounding positively infatuated.

“Sounds cool. What's his name?”

“Err...can't actually remember. You know him though – he's in your year. The one you and your friends picked on.”

“Not Sni-Severus? Severus Snape?!”

“That's him yeah!” Regulus' eyes shone even more brightly at the mention of his apparent idol's name.

They had been back at Hogwarts for over a week and Sirius still hadn't put it all together. Snape couldn't have meant the things he supposedly said, surely? He called his best friend a mudblood to her face after all! Was this some kind of elaborate plot to win back Lily who he was obviously in love with? Was that what he was using Remus for? He wouldn't put anything past that snake. But when he tried to ask Lily she hadn't a clue what he was talking about.

It didn't really make sense, but Sirius knew one thing: Severus Snape was no good. They all knew that from the first day they met him. So desperate to be sorted into Slytherin. So keen to show off his knowledge of the Dark Arts. He was spiteful, cruel – Hell, he was downright evil. He had to be. Otherwise that would mean they had been wrong about him...and that would mean...

No. They weren't wrong. And they were going to get to the bottom of it!

He eventually worked out where Remus and Snape were sneaking off to all the time. There was this one room in the dungeons within which their names could often be seen floating around on the Marauder's map. Why was Snape making him go there? When he pointed it out to James and Peter they said they had noticed it too.

“Why are they down there all the time?” asked Sirius, clutching the map tightly as he stared down at the dots labelled 'Remus Lupin' and 'Severus Snape.'

“For the last time Sirius – we don't know!” cried an increasingly irritated James, who seemed to be handling the situation much better than he was. “You heard Remus, he said they're friends now. I find the whole thing as bizarre as you but there it is.”

“Their dots are awfully close together...” remarked Peter, puzzled.

“Maybe Remus is braiding his greasy hair,” James replied before laughing at Sirius' look of horror. “They're probably just leaning over a textbook or something. You have to admit that Moony is just as big a swot as Snivellus!”

“Or maybe...” began Sirius, realisation dawning on him. “...maybe Snape's doing something to him...”

“Like what?” asked James, sounding unconvinced.

“I don't know! Something dark! Like...maybe he's hurting him?”

James narrowed his eyes sceptically. “Remus always looks pretty happy after he's come back from seeing him. And he never looks hurt – he looks better than ever actually – and you saw how he was on the train! He could barely contain his excitement about seeing the git!”

“Yeah and don't you think that's weird?”

“I already said I didn't I? But whatever! It's Remus' life. He can spend time with whoever he wants.”

“Look,” said Sirius, starting to feel desperate now. “What if he's controlling Remus in some way? Like with the *Imperious* or some potion?”

Peter scoffed. “There's no way he could do something so advanced!”

“Do you really think that? I know we like to say he's an idiot but he really isn't. He's taken us on three against one before and won. No matter how much we hate to admit it – he's smart.”

“But what would he get out of it?” asked James, still doubtful.

“You guys already know what I think,” said Peter darkly.

“Yes yes,” snapped Sirius. “We know you think he's lured Remus into enlisting with the promise of equal rights for werewolves or whatever.”

“Look. Remus is our friend,” said James. “He's trusted us with a lot. We have to trust him back! If there was something wrong he would tell us.

“But what if he can't tell us?” insisted Sirius. “What if – like I said – he's being controlled? Or threatened?”

James sighed. “So what do you suggest we do?”

“Simple!” replied Sirius more brightly. “Some good old-fashioned Marauder snooping! Map. Cloak. Find out what's going on.”

James considered it for a moment. “Alright. When?”

“No time like the present!” said Sirius, bouncing up from his chair. Finally he felt back in control! “You in?” he asked Peter.

“Course!” he squeaked.

They waited until they reached the dungeons before getting under the cloak. It was dark and dingy enough down there so that anyone passing by would be less likely to notice the odd foot poking out. The thing was way too small for three of them now. Sirius was just starting to think that they should have left Peter behind when the map indicated that they were there.

Sirius placed a hand against the inconspicuous-looking door. There was an empty plaque above it indicating it was once used as a classroom but had since been abandoned, probably for somewhere warmer and less damp than the dungeons. James followed by putting his ear against it but shook his head. No sound could be heard, not even a low murmur of conversation. It must have been charmed.

Peter tried the handle. Locked. Of course. Though they hadn't tried very hard. *Alohomora* worked wonders. Snivellus must have been in a hurry.

They opened the door as quietly as possible. The room was dark. Why hadn't they lit the torches? As soon as they entered they could hear sounds; movement, rustling of clothing, a low, wicked laugh that could only belong to Snape. And then Remus' voice.

“Nngh...why are you so cruel to me?”

More laughter.

“It's because you're always so impatient...”

Then a groan from Remus that sounded like he was in pain. Sirius knew it. He was ready to tear the cloak off them and charge forward, wand raised. But James discouraged him with a stiff shake of his head. He was right. If they were going to go to McGonagall or Dumbledore about this they needed more evidence.

They inched further into the room. As they got closer they saw that candles littered the floor. Some kind of dark ritual? In what little light they gave off they could make out Snape. He was – God – he was on top of Remus! Pinning him down so he couldn't escape! Sirius raised his wand. *Stupefy* on the tip of his tongue.

“Urgh...will you just kiss me already?!” exclaimed Remus, in a very familiar tone of exasperation.

Snape let out an exaggerated sigh. “If you insist...”

The sight of it made Sirius unable to get the words out. It was no awkward first kiss, no playful

experimentation: this had been going on for a while. They fit together perfectly. Remus wrapped his arms around Snape and pulled him closer. And Snape seemed to be enjoying every second.

That is up until the tail end of Sirius' spell hit him in the arm. The words may not have formed, but the emotion and intent behind it was still there. The result seemed to be that he caused Snape to feel a mild stinging sensation rather than be rendered unconscious but, nevertheless, it had the desired effect. The kissing stopped.

“What the-” muttered Snape, rubbing his arm.

He and Remus looked at each other. Their eyes widened with fear when they realised what hit him was a spell. Well...no point hiding any more. Sirius pulled off the cloak.

Chapter End Notes

Omg cliffhanger! This chapter was a challenge because I've never written from Sirius' POV before. He was ridiculously oblivious lol.

Chapter 16

Chapter Summary

Everything comes out into the open.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Three of the people Severus hated most in the world had just appeared before him and all he could do was stare stupidly at them. This was it then. They were caught. Life as Severus knew it was over. He should have expected it. Black had warned him, hadn't he? Before they had even got back to school.

"So how was your Christmas?" Remus had asked excitedly as he burst into Severus' compartment when they were somewhere near Leicester.

"Not bad actually," he replied, dog-eared a corner of his book. "He was passed out by four o'clock. I think that's a new record this year..."

"...and I'm sure that had nothing to do with that Draft of Living Death vial I saw you slip into your trunk last year?"

"I don't know what you're talking about."

It was pathetic but Severus had to admit that even the short time away from Remus had been difficult. He had missed him. And not just a little. Sometimes he marvelled at how much things could change. He had gone from hating Remus to lying doubled over in bed, in the middle of the day, because being so far away from him physically hurt. Even his mum had told him off for sulking this year.

Severus felt a little better about it now because, judging by how much of the train journey back to Hogwarts he was spending with him rather than his friends, Remus had missed him just as much. He would talk non-stop, amber eyes bright and animated as he described what he'd gotten up to in the holiday down to the very last detail. As if he wanted to share with Severus every moment they'd spent apart.

During the parts of the journey he spent alone, Severus still found it difficult to concentrate on his book. He was constantly buzzing with excitement at the thought of Remus returning any minute and his mind ran with all the things he should say to him on his next visit. But when he looked up at the next click of the compartment door sliding open, it wasn't Remus who entered. This boy was darker, more athletic and, by most people's standards, much more handsome. Although to Severus everything about his appearance was nauseating.

“Alright there Sniv?”

Severus didn't take his eyes off him for a second. He quickly ran the calculations. Black hadn't drawn his wand and both his hands were visible. His own wand was in his left inside pocket. (Stupid. He should have kept it on the seat beside him.) It didn't look as though he had left the door open long enough for Potter to slip through under his cloak, but Severus had been wrong before.

“Have a nice Christmas then?” Black continued, remaining standing to keep his positional advantage. “I was going to get you some shampoo, but then I remembered you don't use it.”

“And I was going to brew you a wit-sharpening potion,” replied Severus. “There's no doubt you need it since you've been using the same insults for the past six years. Frankly it's become rather tedious.” Black's sneering face faltered in irritation and Severus took the opportunity to jump back in on the offensive. “Perhaps that's why Remus seems to prefer my company? I imagine the conversation is a bit more stimulating for him.”

“As easy as it is for me to do Snape, I didn't come here to insult you. I came to warn you.”

“That's very considerate of you. Just what's in store for me this time? You're going to have to up your game I'm afraid. I don't find werewolves nearly as frightening anymore...”

Black was steadily losing his composure. His hands had curled into fists at his sides and he was turning an ugly shade of red.

“I came to warn you,” he repeated through gritted teeth. “That me and the others know you're up to something – I haven't figured it out yet-”

“I'm shocked.”

“-but we're going to get to the bottom of it. So you might want to stop messing with Remus now or you'll regret you ever did!”

With that he left Severus alone, slamming the compartment door so hard it was a wonder the glass didn't break. He didn't mention it when Remus returned. Just put on a smile and made sure to keep his hands, which were still shaking from the adrenaline, firmly on his lap. Severus still wasn't sure who Remus would choose if it came down to it.

The professors wasted no time in scaring any leftover festive cheer out of them with the reminder that their most difficult exams yet were only a few months away. The first week of term kept them busy with study planning for the rest of the year; it was the only thing that worked to keep the growing sense of panic at bay. So he'd had little time to worry about Black's threat. Looking back he had been downright complacent!

Severus had been so focused on the mountain of schoolwork that lay ahead that he almost forgot about his birthday. Lily had been the only one who ever made a fuss over it so he wasn't expecting anything this year anyway. Still, it was nice to be seventeen and have all the perks that came with it. He should have guessed Remus was planning something when he had been so eager to get him alone in their usual spot, but he'd put that down to the boy's usual lack of restraint – something Severus enjoyed teasing him about often.

When Remus had presented him with an elaborately wrapped package he had been genuinely shocked. Flabbergasted even. He couldn't remember even telling him when it was. But there were a multitude of ways he could have found out. Remus was very sneaky for a Gryffindor.

"Oh my gosh, will you just open it?" Remus exclaimed with nervous excitement as he watched Severus run the delicate silver ribbon between his fingers.

He unwrapped the package awkwardly, conscious of Remus watching him closely to assess his every reaction. It made him nervous – he wasn't used to receiving gifts. When he got to the black velvet box underneath he removed the lid carefully. He gasped when he saw what was inside. A dragon tooth.

Severus was speechless but only for a moment. Remus waved off all his protests about it being too expensive.

"Oh my – there's not even a chip on it! How did you remember? This really is too much. And it's from a Peruvian Vipertooth! Did you know these have excellent healing properties provided you extract the venom properly? Do you think Slughorn would let me do that for my final project? This is the most perfect thing I've ever seen."

Remus just beamed at Severus while he rambled on. After they'd shared some cake – which Severus was assured the house elves were more than happy to make for them – Remus set about lighting some candles.

"What are you doing?"

"It's called creating ambiance."

"I see...and what kind of ambiance are you trying to create?"

"A romantic one of course."

"Right," drawled Severus, "so you thought an expensive gift and a few candles would have me falling into your arms?"

"Was I wrong?"

"No."

Severus took Remus' face in one hand and brought it closer. He traced his thin lips over Remus' full ones and took in the sweet, familiar taste of his breath. He wasn't going to kiss him. Not yet. It was Severus' birthday after all. They would do it his way.

Instead he pushed Remus lightly down onto his back and sat astride him. He took a moment to appreciate how looked in the candlelight. God he was gorgeous, beautiful even. Severus still couldn't understand why Remus wanted *him*, but it was plain in the way he looked back at him with a grin of anticipation. He leaned over, hovering his mouth over Remus' again, using his hands to pin Remus' arms firmly to his sides whenever he tried reaching up to touch him.

"Nngh...why are you so cruel to me?" Remus moaned into Severus' mouth as he continued to deny their lips any full contact.

He couldn't help but laugh at the sheer frustration on Remus' face. "It's because you're so impatient."

Severus moved in to kiss Remus but tilted his head to the side at the last moment to run his mouth lightly over his neck. He kept his focus there for a time, kissing the delicate skin before taking it between his teeth. As he did he slipped one hand round to rest just under the waistband of Remus' trousers and enjoyed the moan it produced from him.

Their faces met again. Severus pulled back just enough so that he was still out of reach despite Remus' straining. He took in the flushed neck and parted lips as he began to trace slow circles on Remus' navel with his fingertips.

That seemed to break him.

"Urgh...will you just kiss me already?"

"If you insist."

Kissing Remus was no longer frightening, but it was still just as thrilling as it was the first time. He enjoyed teasing Remus, making him wait, watching him slowly go to pieces beneath him, but he enjoyed holding himself back just as much. Once he finally gave in he could never stop. There would just be Remus – the warmth of his mouth, his tongue, his chest, his- OWW!

"What the-"

Severus rubbed at the stinging sensation spreading through his upper arm. There weren't Billywigs in here were there? But as he took in Remus' horrified look of comprehension he quickly came to the same understanding. The faint flash of light that accompanied the pain could only mean one thing – magic.

And now here they were. Severus squeezed his eyes shut tight hoping he could make them disappear, hoping it was just another nightmare. But he wasn't waking up. This was the real thing.

He kept his eyes closed and waited for the insults to come, the slurs, another curse, or maybe just a good old-fashioned beating? The three of them must be taking a long time to decide the direction they were going in because nothing was happening. Finally Potter spoke – well, he made a noise consistent with the level of intelligence he possessed.

"Errr..."

And then Black.

"Sorry. I didn't mean to do that."

An apology? Okay maybe it was a dream. Severus opened his eyes in time to catch Remus' angry reply.

"You're sorry?! What are you doing here? Did you follow us?"

"We thought he was hurting you!" Black protested.

"Well evidently he isn't!" Remus barked back.

“Sniv must have slipped him something,” muttered Pettigrew to the others, his face scrunched up in an expression of disgust. “A love potion or something.”

“Don’t be stupid Wormy,” Black snapped, seemly content to take his frustration out on the other boy. “You know they don’t work like that! Remember when we spiked Mortimer Jenkins’ pumpkin juice with one before? He was running around confessing his love for you to anyone who would listen.”

“Mind control then! Like you said!”

Potter stepped in. “Guys I really don’t think-”

“You lot are so bloody thick sometimes!” Remus exploded. “This has got nothing to do with illegal potions or dark magic! We’re...together. We have been for a while. I’m sorry you had to find out this way but it’s your own fault for spying on us!”

Several beats passed.

“Alright,” said Potter plainly.

Pettigrew looked appalled. “Alright?! Just what part of this is alright?!”

Exactly. What the actual fuck?

But then Black clapped Pettigrew around the back of the head. “Shut it!” he hissed before turning back to Remus and Severus. “We’ll-uh-leave you to it then.”

The three of them began to shuffle out of the room, half of Black’s body blending disconcertingly with the background where the cloak was slung over his shoulder.

“Oh and Snape?”

Severus tensed up again, his hand clutching the handle of his wand as Black turned back to him. He hesitated before speaking. As if what he was about to say was going to be said very begrudgingly.

“Sorry for the misunderstanding.”

Then they were alone again. Remus was looking paler than usual but he seemed much calmer than Severus would ever have imagined him in this situation.

“What in Salazar’s name just happened?!” he exclaimed.

Remus just smiled and shrugged his shoulders. Then he kissed Severus again.

Severus passed his NEWTS with flying colours. With the pressure from his fellow Slytherins no longer present he could put all of his focus onto his studies. Potions, of course, posed no problem for him. He was even able to devote some time to making plans for next year involving the

vipertooth. Professor Slughorn seemed even more excited than he was about his proposed method for venom extraction and what it could do for potioning (and, Severus suspected, what it could do for his own career as the teacher who guided him, but he tried not to be too pessimistic).

Another subject where he excelled was Defence Against The Dark Arts. Again, now that he did not have to be constantly hyper vigilant around Potter, Black and Pettigrew he was able to concentrate much better in class. He didn't have to worry about holding back when demonstrating his skills for fear of drawing too much attention to himself. It almost made him wish he hadn't given up Transfiguration – but Remus was giving him a few tips.

He and the rest of the Marauders were never going to be friends – far from it- but they had started being civil to him. It was a civility that even Black never broke no matter how much Severus subtly goaded him. Truly, he and Potter loved Remus and it seemed they would always stand by him no matter who he chose to be with. Even Severus had to admit that counted for something.

In fact, it was Pettigrew who seemed to be being shunned from their peer group. The way he had so quickly turned on Remus and how difficult he found it to accept his sexuality seemed to have opened the others' eyes to his true nature. It didn't look like any of them would be quick to trust him with anything important anytime soon.

Ironically, the exam he struggled with the most was Care of Magical Creatures. The only distraction left was Remus himself after all. Though they had at least performed well enough for Kettleburn to want them back in his class next year.

“Provided you keep working together!” he had said with a wink of his unpatched eye.

There was only one thing he had left to do before summer. One person he had to clear things up with.

She stood before him by the entranceway, just where Remus said she would be, one hand on her hip and an expression of impatience on her face. Her hair had gotten really long. Severus wanted to tell her that he liked it but thought better of it.

“I'm just here because Remus insisted,” Lily said before he'd even got within acceptable conversation distance.

“Right. Thanks. It won't take long,” said Severus. She continued to look at him as if to say ‘get on with it’ so he did. “I wanted you to hear it from me – I'm not going to join them.”

Lily's eyes widened in surprise but still she kept her guard up. “I'd heard the rumour but I didn't think it was true. I'm...glad...I'm glad for you.”

“Er, thanks.”

He looked away from her awkwardly.

“What made you change your mind?”

“I sort of had my eyes opened,” Severus replied vaguely. “Anyway there's something else...” Lily

crossed her arms as if she knew what was coming, “I wanted to apologise to you.”

“You already have Severus. Multiple times. Remember?”

“I know but I didn’t mean it then.”

“You...you didn’t *mean* it?” she asked, voice rising slightly, her green eyes already beginning to blaze with the first signs of fury. But Severus kept his cool. He had nothing to lose this time after all.

“No...I didn’t. I just said what I thought you wanted to hear. I just wanted you to forgive me and then go back to pretending like nothing was wrong.” He lifted his head to face her. Laid himself bare before her. “But this time I...I truly am sorry. For calling you that. For using that word at all. I should have known better. I could say I got sucked in, that my anger got the better of me, but it’s no excuse. It was my responsibility to stop that happening-not yours. But mostly I’m sorry for thinking you were lesser than me – than anyone – even for a moment, because it wasn’t true – of course it wasn’t- you were the most important person to me and I...I’m grateful I got to be your friend even if...Lily are you alright?”

She had covered her face with her hand. Severus had thought it was out of boredom or annoyance at his speech but then he saw her shoulders were shaking. She flung her arms around him and buried her face in his chest.

“Oh Sev,” she moaned. “I’m so sorry.”

“You’re sorry? What do you have to be sorry about?”

“I c-could feel you c-changing,” she spluttered out between sobs. “I-I didn’t know what to do! I didn’t want to lose you either but-”

“It’s alright,” he murmured reassuringly. “It’s okay. I just said it wasn’t your fault!”

“I know, I know, it’s just...I shouldn’t have abandoned you like that but I was just so hurt and... I’m...I’m just really glad you’re safe and...”

Severus gently moved her back at arm’s length and smiled at her. “You’re a good person.”

“Ha!” Lily choked out, wiping her shining eyes and smiling back at him in return. Last year he would have given anything to see her smile at him like that again. “I’m not so sure about that but thanks. You seem really different. Happier. I’m glad you and Remus became friends. To be honest I thought you were just using him at first.”

“Oh we’re not friends.”

“W-what do you mean?”

“We’re going out.”

“Oh that’s ni-wait WHAT?!”

Severus looked at his battered old trunk. It was getting dangerously full. Should he really take his copy of One Thousand Magical Herbs and Fungi? He probably wasn't going to get much reading done. But Remus said he lived near a wood. They would probably go walking a lot so it might be handy. He stuffed it inside.

"Just how many books are you taking? Is my company that boring?"

He whipped round to find Remus standing right in the middle of his dorm room.

"How did you get *in* here?"

Remus grinned. "Avery let me inside."

"Of course he did," Severus sighed. His friend seemed to have an interest in the two of them that bordered on obsessional.

"Are you ready to go?"

"Just about. Are you really sure this is okay with your mum and dad?"

"Of course! They're desperate to meet you!"

Severus let out a slow breath. "No pressure then. I'm looking forward to seeing Wales though. I've never been."

"Well, it's not all dragons and rolling hills and folk music where we are I'm afraid. Though mum makes a good bara brith."

"I don't know what that is," remarked Severus, turning back to his suitcase.

Remus sidled up behind him and slid his arms around Severus' waist. The feel of his warm breath on the back of Severus' neck still made him shiver. He leaned back against him.

"You'll love it."

Severus enclosed Remus' hands in his own.

"I'm sure I will."

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading this story! Every comment and kudos has meant the world to me. It's been very strange knowing there are people actually excited to read the next chapter but very cool!

I'll be writing another Snupin for the SnapeBang next year. This time set in OOTP time. I'm going to try and make it less cute but I will probably fail!

Works inspired by this one

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